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EDITED BY

LINDSAY TODD DAMON, A.B.
Associate Professor of English in Brown University

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MILTON'S

MINOR POEMS

L'ALLEGRO, IL PENSEROSO, COMUS, AND LYCIDAS

EDITED FOR SCHOOL USE

BY

WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON, M. A., Ph. D.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

CHICAGO
SCOTT, FORESMAN AND COMPANY
1906

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ROBERT O. LAW COMPANY,
PRINTERS AND BINDERS, CHICAGO

PREFACE

In the present edition the main endeavor has been to provide an apparatus that should ensure the complete intelligibility of the four poems forming the text, and an understanding of the circumstances in which they were written. This has made necessary not only an outline of the poet's life, but also a sketch of some of the main tendencies in English politics, civil and ecclesiastical, during his youth. Without some such view, it is impossible for the student to grasp the significance of the political allusions in *Lycidas*, while the other three poems all gain immensely in interest when it is seen how they are related to the Puritanism of which the poetry of Milton is the supreme literary expression.

In addition to the biographical and historical material, a concise statement is given of what is known of the sources of the poems. Teachers using the book have a right to demand that this should be supplied, yet it is by no means to be understood that all students should be required to study it in detail. It is doubtful, indeed, whether the minds of young students should be burdened by more than the general bearing of such a statement of Milton's real or supposed debt to previous writers. More important, because more vital to

the understanding of literary history, is the attempt to outline the development of such forms as the pastoral elegy and the masque previous to their being used by Milton.

The work of æsthetic interpretation has been left almost entirely to the teacher, but a few suggestions may be made. An unusually good opportunity for bringing out the beauty of coherent structure in short poems is afforded by the present texts. The plan of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, which is roughly traced in the Introduction, should be worked out in detail by the student. *Lycidas* will be grasped in a much more satisfactory way if it is clearly brought out in class that there is a regular sequence of parts in the elegy, interrupted by digressions. On the basis of the analysis of the masque elements in *Comus* which will be found on pp. 63-8, the teacher may enlarge on the characteristically Miltonic elements in the poem.

The main facts in connection with the versification of the poems have been stated as simply as possible. The artistic value of the lines, however, will be best imparted *viva voce*, and here again the opportunity is exceptional. The alternating long and short lines at the beginning of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, and the short, rapid measure of the main parts of these poems; the blank verse and the lyrical passages in *Comus;* and the seeming irregularity in the arrangement of rhymes in *Lycidas*, all

afford admirable examples of the use a great poet makes of metrical devices, and should give rise to stimulating discussions. Attention should be drawn also to Milton's double epithets, and the question of the justification of his coinages raised. The first two poems consist of series of pictures, and the student should be induced to test the vividness of these, one by one, by attempting to visualize them. The characteristic ethical elements which appear in all Milton's productions might also be educed and illustrated by reference to his own life.

The great mine of information on the life and times of Milton is Professor David Masson's magnificent work, *The Life of John Milton, narrated in connection with the political, ecclesiastical, and literary history of his time* (6 vols., Macmillan & Co., new ed., Lond., 1881-94). For those to whom this is not accessible, or who desire something on a smaller scale, Mark Pattison's *Milton* in the *English Men of Letters* series, Dr. Garnett's in the *Great Writers* series, and the recent volumes on Milton by Professor Trent (Macmillan, N. Y., 1899) and Professor Raleigh (Putnam, N. Y., 1900) may be mentioned. Dr. Garnett's book contains an excellent bibliography. Of annotated editions of Milton's poems the most elaborate is again Masson's (2d ed., 3 vols., Macmillan, Lond., 1894). Verity's editions (Cambridge University Press) are very full and scholarly, and Professor Trent's edition of the poems contained in the present volume (Longmans, 1898) has

a number of suggestive interpretative notes. Professor Corson has recently published an *Introduction to Milton* which conveniently brings together the more important autobiographical passages from the prose works, but its value is lessened by the lack of exact references to the sources of the texts quoted. Discussions of Milton's versification will be found in the third volume of Masson's large edition of the poems, and in *Milton's Prosody* by Robert Bridges (Clarendon Press). It is, perhaps, unnecessary to refer to the well known essays on Milton by Macaulay and Lowell.

In the preparation of the introduction and notes I have freely consulted the work of previous editors, especially Masson, Verity, Browne, and Trent, and detailed acknowledgment of obligations to these and others will be found in the appropriate places. To Professor Masson, as author of the *Life of Milton*, every modern student of Milton owes an immense debt, and I have to add to this general recognition that of the more personal obligation which a student owes to an inspiring teacher. I also wish to thank, for suggestions in connection with the treatment of the masque, my friends Dr. A. H. Thorndike of Western Reserve University, and Dr. John Lester, recently of Harvard, and, for helpful criticisms throughout, Mr. L. T. Damon of the University of Chicago.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY, September, 1900.

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INTRODUCTION

I. England in Milton's Youth

Among English men of letters there is none whose life and work stand in more intimate relation with the history of his times than those of Milton. Not only was he for a long period immersed in political controversy and public business, but there are few of his important works which do not become more significant in the light of contemporary events, and in turn help the understanding of these events themselves. Both by temperament and by circumstances he was destined to be much more than an interested onlooker during the momentous struggles which had begun to trouble the peace of England at the time he reached manhood; and it is by no accident that his most adequate biography is at the same time a history of his country for three-quarters of a century.

At the time of Milton's birth in 1608, England was passing through a period of transition. Much of that remarkable vigor and abundance of life which had characterized the age of Elizabeth still remained; and the drama, the most typical expression of that age in literature, had hardly begun

to decline. Yet, with the change of dynasty at the union of the crowns of England and Scotland in 1603, there had appeared a tendency to depart from the policy of toleration which had made possible the united patriotism of the preceding reign. The new King, James I., had definite preferences in religious matters, and insisted on making them felt. Lines of cleavage, which had before been only vaguely traceable, broadened into dividing gulfs, and the religious world began more and more to break up into sects and parties. The antagonisms between these, already in many cases present during the reign of Elizabeth, were strengthened when, in the time of Charles I., political issues were added to ecclesiastical; and the hostility and intolerance grew more and more acute, until in 1642 difference of opinion culminated in the horrors of civil war.

Theoretically, all Englishmen were members of the Established Church. But in practice there were two important groups outside the Anglican fold, the Roman Catholics and the Protestant Separatists. Under Elizabeth, the persecution of the Roman Catholics had varied in intensity according to the requirements of the political situation. Thus, when a Catholic power like Spain threatened the national safety, considerable rigor was used to prevent Catholic risings at home. Similarly, in the reign of James, the alarm caused

by the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 led to the exercise of oppressive measures against the same religion. On the other hand, during the negotiations with Spain for a marriage between the Infanta and Prince Charles (1617-1623), these measures were naturally relaxed; and this relaxation continued after 1624, when Charles married Henrietta Maria of France, who was, like the Infanta, a Catholic. Queen Henrietta's influence in this direction remained operative throughout her husband's reign, and had the additional effect of increasing the suspicion with which the Puritans regarded the ecclesiastical policy of the court party.

At the opposite extreme from the Roman Catholic dissenters were the Protestant Separatists, who had left the church of their own accord. Many of them emigrated to Holland, and, later, to America, while others, chiefly Independents and Baptists, attempted, in defiance of the law, to follow their own modes of worship in secret. These last sects were, numerically, unimportant.

Inside the Church there were two great parties, the Prelatists and the Puritans. The Prelatists were those who were on the whole satisfied with the established Episcopacy; and at the accession of James I. they probably numbered about nine-tenths of the whole Church. The attitude of the Puritans at that time is defined by a petition which they presented to James shortly after his

arrival in England. In this document they objected to certain administrative abuses, such as the inefficiency of some of the clergy and the holding of church livings by absentees, whether clerical or lay, who drew a large part of the tithes and hired a vicar on a small salary to care for the parish. More significant was their request to be relieved from compulsory participation in certain of the ceremonies of the Church, such as the wearing of surplices, the use of the Cross in baptism, the observation of holy days (except Sabbath, which they wished to have observed more strictly), and bowing at the name of Jesus. The doctrinal differences which became so important later were not mentioned.

The Puritans gained less than nothing by their petition. The next Convocation of the Clergy (1603, 4) passed a number of canons reaffirming the necessity of the ritual to which objection had been made, and denying the right to dissent. The laws against Nonconformists were more strictly enforced, and many were imprisoned or banished. The effect on the Puritans was seen in the appearance of numerous pamphlets, printed in Holland or secretly in England, protesting against the action of the Prelatists, and in some cases arguing for Independency or Presbyterianism.

On the appointment of a Low Church Archbishop in 1611, the struggle slackened somewhat;

but about 1619 a new element of great importance was introduced. This was the appearance of what was called Arminianism, a doctrinal opposition to the Calvinistic beliefs that salvation was possible only for those predestined to it, and that those who were so elected by God to be saved were incapable of resisting His grace. The situation was complicated for James, who was himself a Calvinist, by the fact that the men of Arminian tendencies were those who were most zealous in the support of Prelacy and the royal prerogative. He attempted to solve the difficulty by issuing *Directions to Preachers*, in which he forbade any clergyman below the degree of Dean to preach on the disputed questions at all; but, as might have been expected, this interference with the liberty of discussion on both sides did little to reassure the Puritans, who saw in the Arminianism of the Prelatists only one more indication of their leanings towards Rome. In fact, many who had taken no part with the Puritans in the agitation against ceremonial were forced to join them by the appearance of this new theological issue.

It was at this juncture that there stepped into the front rank among the leaders in church and state, a man who in a few years became, by force of the definiteness of his views and the restlessness of his energy, the chief agent in hurrying the nation towards the terrible conflict that lay before it.

William Laud was a man of few aims. He believed in the strictest uniformity in worship, and was willing to resort to coercion to bring it about. He was "in favor of a ceremonial of worship in which advantage should be taken of every external aid of architecture, decoration, furniture, gesture, or costume, either actually at the time allowed in the Church of England, or for which there was good precedent in more ancient ritual."[1] He "believed in the 'divine Apostolic right' of Episcopacy, and .... therefore, could not recognize as a true portion of the Catholic Church of Christ any community or set of men who pretended to have emancipated themselves from Bishops."[1] Thus he regarded the members of the Church of Rome as belonging to a true Church, but did not so regard the Independents and Presbyterians. On the doctrine of Election he was anti-Calvinist, and he was a strong upholder of the royal prerogative in church and state.

When Charles I. ascended the throne in 1625, he held his father's beliefs concerning the supremacy of the crown, but in theology was inclined to the Arminianism of Laud. The history of his reign is the history of the attempt to force these opinions upon the people of the United Kingdom. When his first Parliament met, it insisted on prosecuting the King's chaplain for Arminianism, and showed

[1] Masson's *Life of Milton*, ed. 1881, vol. I, p. 362.

its distrust of the policy and advisers of the crown by restricting the usual grants of money. Charles retaliated by dissolving the Parliament. The second Parliament followed its predecessors in its protests against Arminianism and illegal taxation, and met a similar fate. Then for nearly two years (June, 1626—March, 1628) Charles governed without a Parliament, and raised money by such illegal means as forced loans. Meanwhile, the party of Laud became more open and vigorous in its advocacy of the King's supremacy, and of the doctrine that resistance to his will was sacrilege. The phrase "absolute monarchy," which in the time of the Tudors was used to describe a government free from foreign or Papal interference, had been interpreted by James I. in the sense of a monarchy unrestrained by law or the will of the people,[1] and the doctrine thus implied became a watchword of the Royalist party. Forced by lack of money, the King called a third Parliament, only to be met once more with vehement protests against civil and religious grievances. He yielded, obtained a grant of subsidies, and prorogued Parliament. But the value of his supposed concessions soon appeared. Almost at once he relapsed into his previous arbitrary methods; Laud and other Arminians were promoted, and illegal taxation was

[1] See Green's *Short History of the English People*, Lond., 1889, chap. viii., sec. II, p. 478.

again exacted. When this Parliament re-assembled in the beginning of the following year (1629), the old discussions were renewed with greater fervor than ever. Laud had used the interval to issue a Declaration, to be prefixed to the Thirty-nine Articles,[1] reaffirming the King's supremacy in the Church, and forbidding discussion of the Articles. This Declaration became the main object of attack, but the King stood firm, the Parliament was dissolved, and Charles began a period of personal government which lasted for eleven years (1629-1640).

The period during which Charles ruled without a Parliament was marked by a development of the policy which Laud, soon to become Archbishop, had already marked out. In religious affairs, there was an increase in the restrictions on freedom of discussion by the clergy, and the new Primate's favorite ideas in matters of worship and discipline were enforced by his control of Church legislation, patronage, and organization. Convenient instruments of coercion were found in the already existing Courts of Star Chamber and of High Commission, which were used with unsparing severity in the punishment and suppression of Separatists outside the Church, and Puritans

[1] These articles of religion, originally drawn up in the reign of Edward VI, were, with little change, reaffirmed at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, and still remain the official statement of Anglican belief.

within. Men guilty of preaching or writing against Laudian principles were fined, imprisoned, and mutilated in the pillory; and the persecutions were carried even into the Universities. In secular politics, the chief problem was the raising of money, and resort was had to the sale of monopolies in almost all the articles of common consumption, to the revival of obsolete taxes, to fines for a multitude of petty offenses, to the sale of indulgences to Catholics who wished to practice their own religion, and, finally, to Ship-money. This last was an old tax, instituted before England had a permanent navy, to provide money for ships to defend the coast towns. It was now revived, and levied, not only on the seaboard as before, but over the whole country; and it was on the refusal of John Hampden to pay this tax that the spirit of the country at last rose to resist. Meanwhile, Charles and Laud had been attempting to impose Episcopacy on Presbyterian Scotland, but the task was beyond their power, and the Scots were already in armed rebellion.

Nearly four years were to pass before the Civil War in England actually broke out; but it was the rumor of these events of the year 1638, reaching Milton in Italy, which determined him to return to bear his share in his country's struggle for freedom, and which brought to a close the period of his life that includes those of his writings with which we are more immediately concerned.

II. The Life of Milton

The intimate relation between the writings of Milton and the history of his times, to which allusion has been made, is symbolized by the coincidence of the periods into which his life naturally falls with the periods into which English history in the seventeenth century divides itself. The first of these extends from Milton's birth to his return from Italy, and corresponds with that portion of the history which has just been outlined. The second ends with his retirement into private life in 1660, and coincides with the period of the Civil War and the Commonwealth. The third closes with his death in 1674, and falls within the period of the Restoration.

This threefold classification applies also to his literary productions. The first group of these, in which the poems in this volume are the most important, belongs to the period before 1639; the second, consisting chiefly of controversial works in prose, to the period between 1640 and 1660; and the third, the group containing the two great epics and *Samson Agonistes*, to the period of his retirement.

(*a*) *First Period* (1608-1639)

John Milton was born in Bread Street, London, on the ninth of December, 1608. He was the son of John Milton, a prosperous scrivener (*i. e.*, attorney and law-stationer), a man of good family and

considerable culture, especially devoted to music.

In the education of the future poet the elder Milton was exceptionally generous. From childhood he destined him for the Church, and his preparation was begun at home, and continued at St. Paul's School and at Cambridge. We have abundant evidence that the boy was from the first a quick and diligent student, and that the late study to which he was addicted from childhood was the beginning of that injury to his eyes which ended in blindness. He entered Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1625, took the degree of B. A. in 1629, that of M. A. in 1632, when he left the University after seven years' residence. Like several other poets who have brought renown to Cambridge, Milton was severely critical of his University. Yet he seems to have been highly respected while there, both for the purity of his conduct and the brilliance of his scholarship; and years afterwards he made public acknowledgment of "that more than ordinary favour and respect, which I found above any of my equals at the hands of those courteous and learned men, the fellows of that College wherein I spent some years: who at my parting . . . signified many ways how much better it would content them that I would stay."[1]

[1] *Apology for Smectymnuus*, Milton's *Works*, ed. Mitford, vol. III, p. 265.

Milton left Cambridge for his father's house at Horton in Buckinghamshire with his career still unsettled. It has been mentioned that he had been intended for the Church, but this prospect he had given up before he took his Master's degree. The reasons for the change of purpose he has himself stated in no uncertain words. "Coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the Church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, . . . I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking bought and begun with servitude and foreswearing."[1] And he refers to having been "Church-outed by the Prelates"—a phrase which finds sufficient explanation in what has been said of the policy of Laud.

The life to which Milton settled down at Horton was one of quiet but persistent study, varied with occasional poetical production. Authorship, indeed, seems to have taken the place of the ministry in his vague plans for the future, though the particular form it was to take was long undefined. Even as a child he had written verses, and at the University he had produced, besides academic exercises and a number of Latin poems, occasional poetical effusions in English, the most notable

[1] *The Reason of Church Government* (1641), *Works*, vol. III, p. 150.

being the *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* and the enthusiastic *Epitaph on Shakspere*. Among all the writings of that period, however, the most interesting autobiographically is the *Sonnet on his Being Arrived at the Age of Twenty-three*, which may be quoted here to show how he anticipated the criticisms upon his apparent lack of purpose and achievement:

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
Yet, be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye

We may note implied here (besides the consciousness that he might seem open to reproach) an attitude of awaiting without impatience the fulfilment of his destiny, and a determination that, to whatever goal he might ultimately be led, there should be no doubt as to the principles by which he was to be governed on his road thither. Both things were profoundly characteristic. In

his own ultimate greatness Milton never ceased to believe; yet he looked forward to it in no vain-glorious spirit, but with a legitimate pride in the part allotted to him in the purposes of Providence. With equal certainty did he hold to the necessity of personal purity and integrity in the man who was to perform noble deeds, whether in affairs or in literature. The man who "speaks of high matters," he insists, must live temperately and have "a youth chaste and free from guilt, and rigid morals, and hands without stain."[1] And again; "He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is, a composition, and pattern of the best and honourablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy."[2] Such was the spirit in which Milton prepared himself for his life-work.

Among the results of the years spent at Horton between 1632 and 1638 were a Latin poem, *Ad Patrem*, apparently written in reply to some mild remonstrance from his father on his giving up the prospect of a regular profession in favor of scholarship and letters; *L'Allegro; Il Penseroso; Arcades*

[1] Letter to Charles Diodati.

[2] *Apology for Smectymnuus*, *Works*, ed. Mitford, vol. III, pp. 270,1.

(part of an entertainment given in honor of the Dowager Countess of Derby); *Comus;* and *Lycidas.*

In Milton's days and for long afterwards, no young gentleman's education was regarded as complete until he had made "the Grand Tour" of the continent. It was, then, in accordance with fashion, as well, no doubt, as with his own taste, that in 1638 Milton set out on a journey to Italy. After some days in Paris, he passed on by way of Nice to Genoa, Leghorn, Pisa, and Florence, in which last city he spent about two months in the society of wits and men of letters. He seems to have been received with marked courtesy, and to have appreciated the reception. In or near Florence he "found and visited the famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition for thinking in Astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licencers thought," a martyr to truth who doubtless appealed strongly to Milton's indignation, and who would have touched him still more deeply could he have foreseen that one day they were to suffer in common the fate of blindness. After two months more spent in Rome, he visited Naples, and had intended to cross to Sicily and go thence to Greece, when rumors of civil war in England led him to turn his face homewards, "inasmuch," he says, "as I thought it base to be travelling at my ease for intellectual culture while my countrymen at home were fighting for liberty."

He may have learned that things had not gone so far as he feared, for he did not go directly to England, but paid second visits to Rome (where his boldness in religious discussion led him to run risks from the Jesuits), and to Florence, thence to Venice, Verona, Milan, and Geneva, and so by Paris to England, where we find him in August, 1639. His writings produced abroad were all in Italian or Latin, and seem to have brought him considerable distinction among the Italian men of letters whom he met.

(*b*) *Second Period* (1640-1660)

Thus was closed the period of Milton's education; and had public affairs permitted it, he might now have begun to carry out his plan for the great poem which was the most persistent of the many schemes he had meditated for literary production on a large scale. But public affairs did not permit it. Whatever view one takes of the merits of the political and religious questions involved, or of the permanent value of the prose writings which formed Milton's contribution to their settlement, it seems clear that a man of his temperament and principles could not have done otherwise than he did. There has been much not very fruitful discussion on what he might have written in pure literature had he turned his back upon the cause of liberty, the cause whose welfare was his deepest passion. But such conduct in such a man would

have been desertion, and, according to his own principles, would have unfitted him for noble achievement in any field.

Yet Milton did not plunge rashly into the conflict. Shortly after he returned from the Continent, the household at Horton was broken up, and he went to London to resume his studies, and decide on the form and subject of his great poem. Part of his time was occupied in teaching his two nephews, and afterwards he took under his care a small number of other youths, sons of his friends. In 1643, he married Mary Powell, the daughter of an Oxfordshire Royalist. In about a month she left him and remained away for two years, at the end of which time she sought and obtained a reconciliation. She died in 1653 or 1654, leaving him three little daughters. He married a second time in 1656, but this wife lived only fifteen months after the marriage.

The main occupation of his first years in London was controversy. We have said that liberty was Milton's deepest passion, and in liberty we sum up the theme of his prose writings. There are "three species of liberty," he says, "which are essential to the happiness of social life—religious, domestic, and civil," and for all three he fought. His most important prose works may, indeed, be roughly classed under these heads:

1. Religious.—A group of five pamphlets against Episcopacy (1641, 2).
2. Domestic.—This he subdivides as follows:
   a. Education: one pamphlet (1644).
   b. Marriage: four pamphlets on behalf of freedom of Divorce (1643–5). Milton's personal experience with his first wife seems to have first led to his consideration of this subject.
   c. Free Speech: *Areopagitica* (1644), an argument in favor of unlicensed printing. This is the most important of Milton's prose writings regarded as literature.
3. Civil.—A large number of pamphlets on questions arising out of the execution of Charles I and the establishment of a Commonwealth (1649-1660).

His prose writing continued into his last period, when he produced, among other things, a history of Britain to the Norman Conquest, and a Latin disquisition on Christian Doctrine, which is our chief source of information about his later theological opinions.

Meanwhile, the crisis in national affairs was growing more acute. In 1639, the Scots had obtained from Charles, through force of arms, the temporary withdrawal of all attempts to force Episcopacy upon them. Soon, however, he had broken with them again, had called the Short

Parliament in order to obtain supplies, had been presented with a request for the redress of grievances, and had once more ordered a dissolution. A second attempt to subdue the Scotch resistance by force failed, and in November, 1640, Charles called the famous Long Parliament. This assembly began by instituting constitutional reforms with great energy, and later took up Church questions. It was at this juncture that Milton entered the lists with his pamphlets against Episcopacy.

In 1642, the differences between Charles and the Parliamentary party became so acute that civil war broke out; and after a struggle of four years it ended in the overthrow of the Royalists, and the surrender of the King to the Scots auxiliaries who had been fighting on the Parliamentary side in England.

Now a new cause of controversy arose. The opponents of the King split into two parties, one desirous of establishing a strict and uniform national church on Presbyterian principles, with no toleration for dissenters, the other standing for the right of liberty of worship for those whose consciences forbade their entering the established Church. The latter party, supported by Cromwell and the army, triumphed; and to this side Milton belonged.

Charles, meanwhile, had been negotiated with again and again; had entered into a treaty with

the Scots with the result of bringing about a second civil war, which ended abruptly in the overthrow of his allies; and had finally been brought to trial by the army and the remnant of the Long Parliament, condemned, and executed (January, 1649).

England now became a Republic, and Milton threw himself into the task of defending the principles on which it had been established. He became officially associated with the new government as Secretary for Foreign Tongues, in which capacity he not only conducted its foreign correspondence, but also acted as its literary adviser and champion in the controversies by pamphlet that arose in connection with the execution of the King and the theory of the Commonwealth. It was in the midst of these activities that a great calamity fell upon him. The defence of the late King had been undertaken by the famous Dutch Latinist Salmasius in a *Defensio Regia*, and to Milton fell the task of replying to it. His eyesight, weakened even in childhood by overstudy, was now failing fast, and he was warned by physicians that it would go altogether if he persisted in this work. But to Milton the fight he had entered was no mere matter of professional employment as it was to his opponent, and he deliberately sacrificed what remained to him of light in the service of the cause to which he was devoted. The reply was a most effective one, but it left Milton hopelessly

blind. With the aid of an assistant, however, he retained his office through the Protectorate of Cromwell, until the eve of the Restoration.

(*c*) *Third Period* (1660-1674)

Oliver Cromwell died in 1658, his son Richard succeeded him for a short time, and in 1660 Charles II. was restored to the throne. To the last Milton fought with tremendous earnestness against this catastrophe. For, to him, it was indeed a catastrophe. The return of the Stuarts meant to him not only great personal danger, but, what was far more important, it meant the overthrow of all that he had for twenty years spent himself to uphold. It meant the setting up in government, in religion, and in society, of ideals and institutions that he could not but regard as the extreme of reaction and national degradation. Almost by a miracle he escaped personal violence, but he was of necessity forced into obscure retirement; and there, reduced in fortune, blind, and broken-hearted, he devoted himself to the production of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained.* The great schemes which in his early manhood he had planned and dreamed over, had for years been laid aside; but now at last he had a mournful leisure, and with magnificent fortitude he availed himself of the opportunity.

Paradise Lost had been begun even before the King's return; in 1665 it was finished, and in 1667

the first edition appeared. *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* were published in 1671. The *History of Britain* already mentioned, and a number of other prose works, chiefly of a personal and curious interest, were produced in the same period.

In 1657, Milton's second wife, Catherine Woodcock, had died. For about seven years after, he lived alone with his three daughters, whom he trained to read to him not merely in English, but in Latin, Greek, Italian, French, Spanish, and Hebrew, though they did not understand a word of what they read. What little we know of their relations to their father is not pleasant. They seem to have been rebellious and undutiful, though doubtless there was much provocation. In 1663, Milton took a third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, who did much to give ease and comfort to his last years, and who long survived him.

The retirement in which he lived during this third period, when public affairs seemed to him to have gone all wrong, was not absolutely solitary. He was visited by a number of friends and admirers, men of culture and rank, and often by foreigners who wished, before they left London, to see the great Latinist who had humbled Salmasius. The harshness that appears in his controversial writings, and the somewhat unsympathetic austerity that seems to be indicated by his relations

with his first wife and his children, are to be counterbalanced in our minds by the impression of companionableness that we derive from the picture of the old blind poet, sought out by many who not merely admired his greatness, but found pleasure in his society, and counted it a privilege to talk with him and read to him. Stern and sad he could hardly fail to be, but his old age was peaceful and not bitter.

He died on November 8, 1674, and was buried in the Church of St. Giles, Cripplegate, London.

III. L'Allegro and Il Penseroso

L'Allegro and *Il Penseroso* are believed to have been written while Milton was at Horton, shortly after he left Cambridge in 1632. They are companion studies of the characteristic occupations of two men of different temperaments, or of the same man in two different moods. The plan of the two pieces is in general the same. Both begin with an invocation and a fanciful mythological genealogy, and proceed to describe a series of imagined typical experiences. These follow roughly the times of the day in natural succession, but it is not to be supposed that in either case Milton meant the hero to include within one span of twenty-four hours all the occupations mentioned. Thus L'Allegro, the cheerful man, may rise with the lark, walk out among the blithe sounds of the early morning, observe the various occupations of

the country people, and in the evening sit by the fire and hear their rustic tales. Or he may spend his time among the brilliant gaieties of the court, or go to the theatre, or listen to light music. On the other hand, Il Penseroso, the meditative man, hears the nightingale instead of the lark, and walking out by moonlight, he catches the sound of a far-off curfew over the waters. Or, if the evening is chill, he will sit by his fireside listening to the sounds in the street below, or studying philosophy and literature until the dawn. The congenial morning for him will be cloudy, with showers and wind, and when the sun begins to glare he will seek shades in the gloom of the forest, where he will drowse beside a murmuring stream. He will find delight, too, in the dim light of a great church, and in the solemn tones of the organ. His old age he would spend in the peaceful retirement of a hermitage.

Milton is supposed by some to have received suggestions for these poems from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, especially the prefatory verses called *The Author's Abstract of Melancholy*, and from the song, *Hence, all you vain delights*, in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Nice Valour*. In neither case is the obligation very clearly marked. Another probable source of suggestion, to which attention does not seem to have yet been called, is in John Marston's *Scourge of Villainy, Satire* xi;

Sleep, grim Reproof; my jocund Muse doth sing
In other keys, to nimbler fingering.
Dull-sprighted Melancholy, leave my brain—
To hell, Cimmerian night! in lively vein
I strive to paint, then thence all dark intent
And sullen frowns! Come, sporting Merriment
Cheek-dimpling Laughter, crown my very soul
With jouisance, whilst mirthful jests control
The gouty humours of these pride-swoll'n days.[1]

The resemblance of these lines, both in thought and phrasing, to the opening of *L'Allegro* scarcely needs to be pointed out.

Both poems contain the same variety of metres. They open with ten lines of six and ten syllables alternately, while the main parts of the poems consist of lines of eight syllables. The accents fall as a rule on the even, but not infrequently on the odd, syllables, and in the latter case, the line is one syllable shorter. The arrangement of rhymes in the opening lines is as follows:—a b b a c d d e e c; throughout the rest of the poems the lines rhyme in pairs.

IV. Comus

During the reign of Charles I., as for a considerable time previously, the government of certain outlying parts of the realm was presided over by noblemen with almost vice-regal state. Such was the position of Wentworth, afterwards Earl

[1] *The Works of John Marston*, ed. by A. H. Bullen, London, 1887, vol. III, p. 371.

of Strafford, as Lord President of the North and later as Lord Deputy in Ireland, and such also was that of the Earl of Bridgewater, who had been created Lord President of Wales. The appointment was made in 1631, but the Earl does not seem to have actually entered upon his office until a year or two later. At any rate, it was not till the summer of 1634 that the celebrations in honor of his inauguration were held; and it was these celebrations that gave occasion for the writing of *Comus*.

Mr. Henry Lawes, one of the most distinguished musicians of the time, and a person of experience in the presentation of court entertainments, was intimate both with the Bridgewaters—to some of whom he had given instruction in music—and with Milton. Indeed, he had already induced the young poet to write his *Arcades* for an entertainment to be given in honor of a member of the same noble family. It is more than probable, then, that it was through Lawes that Milton came to compose this work, so far his most considerable production. Lawes himself wrote the music for the songs, attended to the stage management, acted the very important part of the Attendant Spirit, and, some years later, obtained Milton's consent to the publication of the poem itself.

The form of the entertainment was far from unusual at the time. The practice of dancing by

masked figures had existed as part of the revels on festive occasions in England for two or three centuries; but in the beginning of the sixteenth century, if not sooner, the additional feature of the dancing of the masquers with the spectators was introduced (from Italy, one chronicler seems to say), and the name *masque* was used of the performance. Throughout the reign of Elizabeth, it underwent a considerable development, and came to be a common episode in the regular drama, as well as a frequent part of the gorgeous entertainments in which that queen delighted. But it was not till the accession of James I. that, in the hands of Ben Jonson, it took rank in England as a form of literature. To the introductory speech and the occasional songs in which had hitherto mainly consisted the literary elements of the representation, Jonson added dialogue of varying length and the grotesque anti-masque, while the mechanical ingenuity of Inigo Jones and the musical ability of men like Lawes combined to build up those splendid and costly performances which were one of the chief sources of brilliancy in the court society of the reigns of James I. and Charles I. The form was at its point of highest development when Milton produced *Comus;* and an analysis of that performance into its most important elements will sufficiently indicate the characteristics of the type.

1. The occasion was that of an important festivity in a great family. So royal accessions, progresses, weddings, and the like, were most frequently celebrated by a masque.

2. Most of the actors in *Comus* were members of a noble family. This was usual, and distinguished the masque from the stage-plays performed by professional actors.

3. The long introductory speech by the Attendant Spirit, in which the situation is explained to the audience, represents the prologue which, spoken by a "presenter," was probably the first literary element to attach itself to the original masque dance.

4. At vv. 960 and 974 the words of the Spirit indicate courtly dancing of a different type from that of the rustics that has just taken place. This was doubtless taken part in by some members of the audience, as such mixed dances had been a feature of masques since the time of Henry VIII. at least.

5. The dance of monsters, introduced by vv. 143, 4, and the country dances referred to in vv. 951 ff. and 958, and indicated by the stage direction at v. 957, are examples of the anti-masque used by Jonson to afford contrast and amusement. The anti-masque was frequently performed by professionals of whose names no records are preserved, and as Comus himself takes part in

the first one at v. 144, we may here have a reason why the name of the performer who acted this role has not been handed down.

6. The mythological element seen, for example, in the character and genealogy of Comus and of Sabrina, had for long been one of the characteristics of the type. The water-nymphs were especially common.

7. Since masques were usually produced in honor of some great personage, it was natural that flattering speeches and complimentary allusions should be prominent in the dialogue. Examples of this are found in *Comus* in the following passages:—

a. To the Earl of Bridgewater, vv. 30-36.

b. To the Bridgewater family, vv. 34, 966-975, and more especially to the Lady Alice Egerton, vv. 145-150, 244-264, 366 ff., 555-562, 739 ff., and her brothers, the Viscount Brackley and Mr. Thomas Egerton, vv. 297-303.

c. To Mr. Henry Lawes, the musician, who acted Thyrsis, vv. 494-496.

d. To the Welsh people, who were doubtless represented in the audience, v. 33.

8. The lyrics, which were added to the original dance very early in the development of the masque, are represented here by the song to Echo, vv. 230-243, the songs to Sabrina, vv. 859-889, and

by Sabrina, vv. 890-900, as well as by the lyrical speeches of the Spirit at the end.

9. A pastoral element appears in the disguise of the Spirit and Comus as shepherds, in the speeches made by them in this character, especially in such passages as vv. 493-496, 540-548, and 822, 3, where reference is made to shepherds as devotees of the Muses, and in the dance of shepherds in the second anti-masque. The presence of such features as these in this and other masques has led some critics to confuse the masque in general with the pastoral.[1] There is not, however, any essential connection between the two types; though the conventions of pastoral poetry occasionally found their way into the masque as they did into other literary forms.

10. The didacticism by which Milton availed himself of a festive occasion to proclaim his belief in the supreme value of purity had precedent in the practice of Jonson. The earnestness and elevation, however, of this part of the work suggest how widely Milton's ideas of the scope and purpose of poetry differed from those of his predecessors in the masque and of his contemporaries in English poetry generally.

These points describe with some fullness the type of dramatic composition to which *Comus* belongs. A comparison of this analysis with Milton's

[1] See especially Macaulay's *Essay on Milton.*

poem as a whole shows how much its greatness depends on the use he made of the form, how little on the form itself.

The figure of Comus, God of Cheer or of the Belly, had appeared in Ben Jonson's masque of *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* in 1619, but the resemblance to Milton's creation does not go much farther than what is implied in the name.

Much more suggestive as a source is a curious Latin work, written mostly in prose by a Dutchman, Hendrik van der Putten. *Comus, sive Phagesiposia Cimmeria: Somnium,* as it was called, had been published at Oxford in the year in which *Comus* was composed. It is "the description of a dream in which Comus, the genius of Love and Cheerfulness, appears to the author, declares himself the lord of the whole wide realm of pleasure, and briefly expounds his idea of life." In a "wondrous structure, the palace of Comus, . . a feast is celebrated, the guests at which are masked; but those that one takes for men are Daunian and Getulian wolves, dangerous monsters by their bite, hiding their true nature under masks and hypocritical appearances. . . . . Comus . . . . is found at a brilliant table surrounded by all the refinements of luxury. . . . During the feast Comus sings an ode on the mysteries of his worship. . . . Then Tabutius, an old man, begins to moralize prolixly. . . . The themes which

he handles are drunkenness, excess in eating, frequent banquets, . . . and the like."[1]

In George Peele's *Old Wives' Tale* (pub. 1595), there are two brothers searching for a lost sister who has fallen into the power of an enchanter. The enchanter has learned his magic from his witch mother, and exercises it by means of a potion which induces forgetfulness. Finally the enchantment is broken and the lady liberated. It contains also an echo-song, vaguely suggestive of the first lyric in *Comus*. There is no reason why Milton may not have read this play, and had one or two of its features in mind when he constructed the plot of his masque, but the method of treatment and the whole atmosphere of the two works are so utterly different that it would be a mistake to regard the *Old Wives' Tale* as in any important sense the original of *Comus*.

Even less substantial are the resemblances to Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*. This play, largely imitated from two Italian pastoral dramas, Tasso's *Aminta* and Guarini's *Pastor Fido*, is entirely different in plot from *Comus*, and it has no characters which correspond. The resemblances chiefly consist in the fact that the virtue of chastity is the main theme of both, and in a number of small

[1] Masson, *Poetical Works of John Milton*, Lond. and N. Y., 1894, vol. I, pp. 174-6, abridged from I. Schmidt's *Milton's Comus*, Berlin, 1860.

details none of which is important enough to justify any decided statement about Milton's indebtedness.

In the *Inner Temple Masque* by William Browne (1614), the chief character is Circe, whose attempts to enchant Ulysses bear some likeness to the wiles of Comus. She is surrounded by nymphs and sirens (cf. *Comus*, vv. 252-257) and has a following of men in beasts' shapes who dance an antimasque (cf. *Comus*, v. 144). It is probable that Milton derived suggestions from this production.

Other sources of detail in *Comus*, such as the Circe episode from the *Odyssey*, are pointed out in the notes.

The dialogue of *Comus* is written in the blank verse of ten syllables with five accents, which was the usual metre of the English drama. One passage (vv. 495-512) is rhymed in couplets. There are besides two long lyrical passages (vv. 93-144 and 902-1023) in the same octosyllabic metre as the greater part of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. The songs are made up of a variety of lines, variously rhymed.

V. Lycidas

Lycidas was written in 1637, and published in the following year as the last of a collection of poems by various hands, lamenting the death of Edward King, a Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge. In August, 1637, King had set out to

visit relatives in Ireland; but the vessel in which he was crossing the Irish Sea foundered and was lost. Milton and he had been at Christ's at the same time, and though the intimacy between them was not of such warmth as that existing between Milton and Charles Diodati, for whom he wrote his Latin elegy, (the *Epitaphium Damonis*), he yet seems to have known King well, and to have had a sincere admiration for both his character and his ability.

The poem is a pastoral elegy following the tradition begun by Theocritus. In works of this type, the scene is laid in a fanciful Sicily or Arcadia, whose inhabitants are figured as shepherds, spending their days watching their sheep and playing on their pipes of straw. The example of the Sicilian School had been followed by Vergil and other classical writers, and with the Renaissance there had come a great revival of the pastoral throughout western Europe. The idea had been used not only in elegy but also in prose romance and in the drama; and Milton had English examples in such works as Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and *The Faithful Shepherdess* of John Fletcher. He had already employed the pastoral fiction in *Arcades* and in parts of *Comus*, and throughout the present poem the setting and imagery are of this nature.

The poem opens with a statement of the occasion (vv. 1-14), and this is followed by the conventional invocation of the Muses (vv. 15-22).

The pastoral proper begins with v. 23, where he images the life of King and himself while students at Cambridge, following the same studies and alike experimenting in poetry, as that of two young shepherds, born on the same hillside, herding their flocks together, and piping on the oaten flute. This figure is kept up throughout the poem, except in the digressions.

The first of these (vv. 64-84) deals with Poetry and Fame, and is very significant of the spirit in which Milton devoted himself to a poetical career. In it he rises from the lower view of Fame as mere worldly reputation to a conception of it as the stamp of divine approval.

The lament is then resumed (v. 85) in an attempt to fix the blame for the disaster, and at v. 108 St. Peter is introduced as the guardian of the church he founded, lamenting the death of so promising a youth at a time when the ministry was crowded with hirelings. In this digression on the state of the English Church, the service of which King had intended to enter, we have a splendid burst of indignation against those abuses which from Milton's point of view were bringing the Church into deeper and deeper degradation.[1]

[1] See Section I of this Introduction.

His hope that a short and effective remedy was at hand is expressed in vv. 130, 1.

The elegy proper is then taken up again (vv. 165-185), and he rises from the tone of regret that has prevailed hitherto to a triumphant assertion of his friend's immortality. In these lines he leaves the classical and pagan allusions which, following the tradition of the pastoral, he had freely introduced in the earlier pages, and adopts the language of the New Testament.

In the last eight lines we have a kind of epilogue in which Milton separates himself from the speaker in the foregoing lament, tells of the close of the shepherd's lay, and refers symbolically to his own approaching change of occupation.

The metre of *Lycidas* consists mainly of ten-syllabled lines, with the accents on the even syllables. It is rhymed irregularly, but with the most subtly musical effect; and it is varied by the occasional introduction of a blank verse line and of a shorter line of three accents.[1] So successfully has Milton used this freedom that the poem ranks as one of the most varied and best sustained pieces of rhythm in the language.

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[1] For examples of blank verse lines, see vv. 1, 22, 39, 51, 82, 91, 161; of lines of three accents, see vv. 4, 19, 21, 33, 41, 43, 48, 56, 79, 88, 90, 95, 108, 145.

VI. Milton's Puritanism

In reading the poems of Milton contained in the present volume, it is easy to be at a loss to account for what may appear their inconsistency with Puritanism, as Puritanism is ordinarily conceived. *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* both show a genuine delight in art, and a capacity for sheer pleasure which Puritanism is supposed to have shunned. *Comus* belongs to a type of dramatic literature which, more than any other, is associated with the pleasure-loving Cavalier society, and which is particularly identified with that Court the downfall of which the triumph of Puritanism implied. And *Lycidas*, in spite of the outburst on the corruption in the Church, shows an anxious care for that Church itself—the Church which Puritanism attempted to transform, if not to destroy. How is the author of such poems to be accounted a Puritan?

The explanation lies in a clearer understanding, first, of the history of Puritanism itself; and, second, of the growth of Milton's opinions.

In the first section of this Introduction, there has been indicated a gradual development of Puritan sentiment with regard to ritual and doctrine. This was brought about largely by the innovations of the High Church party; for, as that party attempted more and more effectually to introduce its views and practices into the Established

Church, the Puritans were led to define more clearly and emphasize more strongly their points of difference. Partly, perhaps, through the animus of controversy, partly through logical necessity, these points of difference increased in number and apparent importance. They began to appear in fields that had at first been quite remote from the dispute. Thus, in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, there had been many English gentlemen, Puritan in theology, who were lovers of the beautiful in art, in literature, and, like Milton's father, in music; and who, while rigorously pure in their private morals, were yet generous in their culture and cheerful in their attitude towards life. But it was by the Cavalier that the pleasure-giving sides of life were most assiduously cultivated; and when the Puritans found themselves forced by the ecclesiastical and political issues of the time to take sides against the Cavaliers, they were led by the violence of the more extreme members of their party to relegate to the background those æsthetic tastes which they held in common with the more refined men of the opposite party, and finally, in many cases, to regard all such things as wiles of the devil. Thus became predominant that narrow and unlovely type of Puritanism which to-day is so often regarded as the only one; while, as a matter of fact, it was only the triumph of an extreme party brought about

by the open rupture with those who, whatever may have been their vices, were generous in their view of the place of beauty in life.

Now Milton, by upbringing and by temperament, belonged to the more moderate and cultured group of Puritans. He was brought up in a refined home, his father was a man of artistic sensibilities, and the poet himself received, as we have seen, a most liberal education. His purpose, cherished till manhood, of becoming a clergyman, along with the passage in *Il Penseroso* which shows his appreciation of beautiful architecture and music in the services of the Church, is sufficient to disprove any natural aversion to the English Church itself. Further, he deliberately chose an artistic career; and after the turmoil of the Puritan Revolution was over, he returned to it. For nothing are the poems in the present volume more notable than for their artistic qualities.

But keen as was Milton's love of art, there were things for which he cared still more. Throughout these earlier productions we find him constantly awake to the moral questions suggested by his subject. *Comus*, a poem written ostensibly for the entertainment of a festive gathering, is really an expression of his convictions on fundamental moral problems. The degradation from sensual indulgence, the necessity of the strictest personal purity for the best results, whether in thinking or

living, the conviction that Virtue must in the long run triumph—these things, and not the celebration of the inauguration of the Earl of Bridgewater, are the real themes of the masque. The passion in *Lycidas* rises to its highest pitch, not in expressions of grief over the death of his friend, but in an almost irrelevant burst of righteous indignation over the degradation of the holy office, and the falsehood and hypocrisy and selfishness which were undermining the foundations of the Church.

When he was on the threshold of his career, national events turned this moral enthusiasm into a new channel. The sacred principle of liberty was in danger. Without hesitation, Milton laid aside his poetry and turned to the service of the cause which seemed to him to call most loudly for help; and since the upholders of that cause had in many cases no sympathy with those other interests to which he had expected to devote himself, the period of his active association with them is almost barren of poetical production.

Yet the old ideal was before him still; and when, old, blind, and disappointed of the results of his long hope and endeavor, he retired to his obscure corner, it was not like Swift, "to die like a poisoned rat in a hole," but to take up the task that he had always regarded as his, and to carry it to a glorious consummation. *Paradise Lost* may be the epic of

a dead or dying theology; *Samson Agonistes* may be the grim deathsong of the ruined Roundhead; but in both Milton is the artist still, and the lasting proof of the possibility of the combination of Puritanism and culture.

L'ALLEGRO

HENCE, loathèd Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born
In Stygian cave forlorn
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy!
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There, under ebon shades and low-browed rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come, thou Goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,
And by men heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore:
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying,
There, on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,

So buxom, blithe, and debonair.
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful Jollity,
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathèd smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it, as you go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;
And, if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreprovèd pleasures free:
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:

Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
While the plowman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip round it measures:
Russet lawns, and fallows grey,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim, with daisies pied;
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
Hard by a cottage chimney smokes

From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead.
Sometimes, with secure delight,
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid
Dancing in the chequered shade,
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How Faery Mab the junkets eat.
She was pinched and pulled, she said;
And he, by Friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end;
Then lies him down, the lubber-fiend,

And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes with many a winding bout

Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

IL PENSEROSO

Hence, vain, deluding Joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred!
How little you bested,
Or fill the fixèd mind with all your toys!
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,
Or likest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But, hail! thou Goddess sage and holy!
Hail, divinest Melancholy!
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view,
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The Sea-Nymph's, and their powers offended.
Yet thou art higher far descended:
Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she; in Saturn's reign,

Such mixture was not held a stain.
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of cypress lawn
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come; but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing;
And add to these retirèd Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
But, first and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheelèd throne,
The Cherub Contemplation;

And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er th' accustomed oak.
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among
I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging low with sullen roar;
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removèd place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm

To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook;
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or underground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet or with element.
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine.
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.
But, O sad Virgin! that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower;
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek;
Or call up him that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,

That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride;
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of tourneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant then meets the ear.
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not tricked and frounced, as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kerchieft in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or ushered with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute-drops from off the eaves.
And, when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring
To archèd walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heavèd stroke
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
There in close covert, by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,

While the bee with honeyed thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep.
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings, in airy stream
Of lively portraiture displayed,
Softly on my eyelids laid;
And, as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.
But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowèd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell

Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give;
And I with thee will choose to live.

COMUS

A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634, before the Earl of Bridgewater, then President of Wales

THE PERSONS

The Attendant Spirit, afterwards in the habit of Thyrsis.
Comus, with his crew.
The Lady.
First Brother.
Second Brother.
Sabrina, the Nymph.

The Chief Persons which presented were
The Lord Brackley;
Mr. Thomas Egerton, his brother;
The Lady Alice Egerton.

The First Scene Discovers a Wild Wood
The Attendant Spirit *descends or enters*

Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot

Which men call Earth, and, with low-thoughted care,
Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants
Amongst the enthron'd gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity.
To such my errand is; and, but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.
But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot, 'twixt high and nether Jove,
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadornèd bosom of the deep;
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns
And wield their little tridents. But this Isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-haired deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble Peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide

An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-intrusted sceptre. But their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that, by quick command from sovran Jove,
I was dispatched for their defence and guard:
And listen why; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misusèd wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell. (Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmèd cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?)
This Nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks,
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named:
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,

Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And, in thick shelter of black shades imbowered,
Excels his mother at her mighty art;
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which as they taste
(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst),
Soon as the potion works, their human count'nance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,
Or ounce or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were.
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore, when any favoured of high Jove
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do. But first I must put off
These my sky-robes, spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,

Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

COMUS *enters, with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other: with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering. They come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream;
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigor now is gone to bed;
And Advice with scrupulous head,

Strict Age, and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves;
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only daylight that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto, to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns! mysterious dame,
That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air!
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou ridest with Hecat', and befriend
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;

Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice Morn on the Indian steep,
From her cabined loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale Sun descry
Our concealed solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

The Measure

Break off, break off! I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright. Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods! Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains: I shall ere long
Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course.
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,

And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may her business hear.

The LADY *enters*

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now. Methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,
When, for their teeming flocks and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth
To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
Of such late wassailers; yet, oh! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket-side
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then, when the grey-hooded Even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,

Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phoebus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts. 'Tis likeliest
They had engaged their wandering steps too far;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me. Else, O thievish Night,
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That Nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
With everlasting oil to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong-siding champion, Conscience.
Oh, welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,
And thou, unblemished form of Chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill

Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassailed....
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err: there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.
I can not hallo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture; for my new-enlivened spirits
Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

Song

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy airy shell
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well:
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet Queen of Parley, Daughter of the Sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies.

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom, certain, these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan or Sylvan, by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

Lady. Nay, gentle shepherd ill is lost that praise
That is addressed to unattending ears.
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my severed company,
Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.
Comus. What chance, good Lady, hath bereft you thus?
Lady. Dim darkness, and this leavy labyrinth.
Comus. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?
Lady. They left me weary on a grassy turf.
Comus. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?
Lady. To seek i' the valley some cool friendly spring.
Comus. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady?
Lady. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.
Comus. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.
Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit!
Comus. Imports their loss, beside the present need?
Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.
Comus. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?
Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.

Comus. Two such I saw, what time the laboured ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinked hedger at his supper sat.
I saw them under a green mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port was more than human, as they stood.
I took it for a faery vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-strook,
And, as I passed, I worshiped. If those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to Heaven
To help you find them.
Lady. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
Comus. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.
Lady. To find that out, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.
Comus. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;

And if your stray attendance be yet lodged,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatched pallet rouse. If otherwise,
I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.

Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest-offered courtesy;
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,
With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was named,
And yet is most pretended. In a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportioned strength! Shepherd, lead on.

The TWO BROTHERS

Eld. Bro. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou fair moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite dammed up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us

With thy long levelled rule of streaming light,
And thou shalt be our Star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.
Sec. Bro. Or, if our eyes
Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks, penned in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs.
But, oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillowed head, fraught with sad fears.
What if in wild amazement and affright,
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?
Eld. Bro. Peace, brother: be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils;
For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or, if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my sister so to seek,

Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retirèd solitude,
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That, in the various bustle of resort,
Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired.
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.

Sec. Bro. 'Tis most true
That musing meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his gray hairs any violence?
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard

Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on Opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night or loneliness it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unownèd sister.

Eld. Bro. I do not, brother,
Infer as if I thought my sister's state
Secure without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I incline to hope rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength,
Which you remember not.

Sec. Bro. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

Eld. Bro. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own.
'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity;

She that has that is clad in complete steel,
And, like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharboured heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;
Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity.
Yea, there where very desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblenched majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,

Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace that dashed brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And in clear dream and solemn vision
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal. But, when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres,
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself by carnal sensualty
To a degenerate and degraded state.

Sec. Bro. How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,

But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.
Eld. Bro. List! list! I hear
Some far-off hallo break the silent air.
Sec. Bro. Methought so too; what should it be?
Eld. Bro. For certain,
Either some one, like us, night-foundered here,
Or else some neighbour woodman, or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
Sec. Bro. Heaven keep my sister! Again, again, and near!
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.
Eld. Bro. I'll hallo.
If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us!

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *habited like a shepherd*

That hallo I should know. What are you? speak.
Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else.
Spir. What voice is that? my young Lord? speak again.
Sec. Bro. O brother, 'tis my father's Shepherd, sure.
Eld. Bro. Thyrsis! whose artful strains have oft delayed
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale.
How camest thou here, good swain? Hath any ram

Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook?
Spir. O my loved master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, oh! my virgin Lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?
Eld. Bro. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without blame
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.
Spir. Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.
Eld. Bro. What fears, good Thyrsis? Prithee briefly shew.
Spir. I'll tell ye. 'Tis not vain or fabulous
(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,
Storied of old in high immortal verse
Of dire Chimeras and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.
Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries,

And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
Charactered in the face. This have I learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts
That brow this bottom glade; whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorrèd rites to Hecate
In their obscurèd haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits and guileful spells
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sate me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill. But ere a close
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And filled the air with barbarous dissonance;
At which I ceased, and listened them a while.

Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtained Sleep.
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death. But, oh! ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honoured Lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear;
And "O poor hapless nightingale," thought I,
"How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!"
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place
Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew), had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent Lady, his wished prey;
Who gently asked if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here;

But further know I not.
Sec. Bro. O night and shades,
How are ye joined with hell in triple knot,
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?
Eld. Bro. Yes, and keep it still;
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
Of malice or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm:
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled;
Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness, when at last,
Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed and self-consumed. If this fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on!
Against the opposing will and arm of heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But for that damned magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms

'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to return his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.

Spir. Alas! good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead.
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

Eld. Bro. Why, prithee, Shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this relation?

Spir. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprisal
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled
In every virtuous plant and healing herb
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray.
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing;
Which, when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy,
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And shew me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out:
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,

But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon;
And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.
He called it Hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovran use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,
Or ghastly Furies' apparition.
I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compelled.
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised,
Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off. If you have this about you
(As I will give you when we go), you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,
And brandished blade rush on him: break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground;
But seize his wand. Though he and his curst crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or, like the sons of Vulcan, vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis, lead on apace; I'll follow thee;
And some good angel bear a shield before us!

The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness: soft music, tables spread with all dainties. COMUS *appears with his rabble, and* THE LADY *set in an enchanted chair: to whom he offers his glass; which she puts by, and goes about to rise*

Comus. Nay, Lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster,
And you a statue; or as Daphne was,
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.
Lady. Fool, do not boast;
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Though hast immanacled while Heaven sees good.
Comus. Why are you vexed, Lady? why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.
And first behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.
Not that Nepenthes, which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.

Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms,
Scorning the unexempt condition
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.

Lady. 'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage and the safe abode
Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!
Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence
With vizored falsehood and base forgery?
And would'st thou seek again to trap me here
With liquorish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer. None
But such as are good men can give good things;
And that which is not good is not delicious
To a well-governed and wise appetite.

Comus. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence!
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutched the all-worshiped ore and precious gems,
To store her children with. If all the world
Should, in a pet of temperance, feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,
Not half his riches known, and yet despised;
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,

And strangled with her waste fertility:
The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their lords;
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamonds
Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, Lady; be not coy, and be not cozened
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin; must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself.
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languished head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship.
It is for homely features to keep home;
They had their name thence: coarse complexions
And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advised; you are but young yet.

Lady. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb.
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments,
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance. She, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance.
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumbered with her store;
And then the Giver would be better thanked,
His praise due paid: for swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enough? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of chastity
Fain would I something say;—yet to what end?

Thou hast not ear, nor soul, to apprehend
The sublime notion and high mystery
That must be uttered to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginity;
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced.
Yet, should I try, the uncontrollèd worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,
And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.
Comus. She fables not. I feel that I do fear
Her words set off by some superior power;
And, though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more!
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation;
I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood.
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this

Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight,
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.

The BROTHERS *rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground: his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The* ATTENDANT SPIRIT *comes in*

Spir. What! have you let the false enchanter scape?
O ye mistook; ye should have snatched his wand,
And bound him fast. Without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed and motionless.
Yet stay, be not disturbed; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be used,
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.
There is a gentle Nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream:
Sabrina is her name: a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enragèd stepdame, Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood
That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.

The water nymphs, that in the bottom played,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectared lavers strewed with asphodil,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made Goddess of the river. Still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vialed liquors heals:
For which the shepherds, at their festivals,
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invoked in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was her self,
In hard-besetting need. This will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

Song

Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save.

Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus.
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace;
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wizard's hook;
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell;
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands;
By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,
And the songs of Sirens sweet;
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the Nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance;
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,

And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answered have.
Listen and save!

SABRINA *rises, attended by Water-nymphs, and sings*

By the rushy-fringèd bank,
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread.
Gentle swain, at thy request
I am here.

Spir. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmèd band
Of true virgin here distressed
Through the force and through the wile
Of unblessed enchanter vile.

Sabr. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnarèd chastity.
Brightest Lady, look on me.
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops that from my fountain pure
I have kept of precious cure;

Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next this marble venomed seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.
Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste ere morning hour
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

SABRINA *descends, and* THE LADY *rises out of her seat*

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmèd waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drought or singèd air
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crowned
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.
Come, Lady; while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursèd place,

Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound
Till we come to holier ground.
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide;
And not many furlongs thence
Is your Father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wished presence, and beside
All the swains that there abide
With jigs and rural dance resort.
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer.
Come, let us haste; the stars grow high,
But Night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow Town, and the President's Castle: then come in Country Dancers, after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT *with the two* BROTHERS *and* THE LADY

Song

Spir. Back, shepherds, back! enough your play
Till next sun-shine holiday.
Here be, without duck or nod,

Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise
With the mincing Dryades
On the lawns and on the leas.

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother

Noble Lord and Lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight.
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own.
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual folly and intemperance.

The dances ended, the SPIRIT *epiloguizes*

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky.
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree.

Along the crispèd shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces, and the rosy-bosomed Hours
Thither all their bounties bring;
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west-winds, with musky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound,
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.
But far above, in spangled sheen,
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced
Holds his dear Psyche, sweet entranced
After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.
But now my task is smoothly done:

I can fly, or I can run,
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend,
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free.
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

LYCIDAS

In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637; and, by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height.

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.
Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse:
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour *my* destined urn,
And as he passes turn,

And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!
For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute;
Tempered to the oaten flute,
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long;
And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.
But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes, mourn.
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.
Ay me! I fondly dream
"Had ye been there,"....for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal nature did lament,
When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?
Alas! what boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely, slighted shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
But, the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorrèd shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"

Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears:
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."
O fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the Herald of the Sea
That came in Neptune's plea.
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
And questioned every gust of rugged wings
That blows from off each beakèd promontory.
They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed:
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.
Next, Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge

Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.
"Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"
Last came, and last did go,
The Pilot of the Galilean Lake;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:—
"How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as, for their bellies' sake,
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!
Of other care they little reckoning make,
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said.
But that two-handed engine at the door

Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."
Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so, to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd;
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,

Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great Vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold.
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth:
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals grey;
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay.
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay.
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

A. S.—Anglo Saxon.
B.—R. C. Browne, *Milton's Poetical Works* (Clarendon Press).
Cf.—Compare.
Fr.—French.
Lat.—Latin.
M.—Masson, *Milton's Poetical Works* (Macmillan).
O. F.—Old French.
Skeat—Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary*.
T.—W. P. Trent, *Milton's L'Allegro, Il Penseroso*, etc. (Longmans).
V.—A. W. Verity, editions of *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso*, etc. (Cambridge University Press).

L'ALLEGRO

Title—*L'Allegro:* Italian, the cheerful man.

1.—*Melancholy.* The mythological figures in these poems are sometimes taken from the classics, sometimes, as in this case, created and given a parentage by Milton.

2.—*Cerberus:* in Greek mythology, the three-headed dog who guarded the entrance to the lower world.

3.—*Stygian.* The cave of Cerberus looked out on the Styx, one of the four rivers of Hades.

5.—*uncouth:* literally, "unknown," hence "wild," "fearful."

6.—*brooding:* partly literal, in keeping with the figure suggested also by *wings;* partly metaphorical, in keeping with the idea of watchfulness in *jealous.*

7.—*night-raven.* The raven is not a night bird, yet Shakspere also uses this term. The croaking of a raven was regarded as ominous, and perhaps the compound was formed, without reference to natural history, to intensify the idea of gloom.

10.—*Cimmerian.* The Cimmerians were a mythical people who, according to Homer (*Odyssey*, xi, 14) dwelt in perpetual mist and darkness.

12–16.—This account of the parentage of the three Graces (Euphrosyne, Aglaia, and Thalia) has been traced to Servius, a fourth century commentator on Vergil.

12.—*Euphrosyne:* Mirth. *yclept:* called, from the past participle of A. S. *cleopian.*

17.—*sager:* more sagely, or, "some wiser poets."

19.—*Zephyr:* the west wind. *Aurora:* the dawn.

12–24.—Note the significance of the two parentages suggested for Mirth: first, Love and Wine; second, and to Milton preferable, the spring breeze and the early morning.

22.—Cf. Shakspere's "Morning roses newly wash'd with dew" (*Taming of the Shrew*, II, i, 174).

24.—*buxom:* originally, "pliant;" later, as here, "gracious," "lively." What is the modern sense? *debonair:* O. F. *de bon aire*, of a good mien (Skeat); courteous, pleasant.

27.—*Quips:* sharp speeches. *cranks:* witty *turns* of expression. *wanton wiles:* sportive tricks.

28.—*becks:* nods, signs, bows. (Contracted from *beckon.*)

29.—*Hebe:* the goddess of Youth, who carried the cups of nectar to the gods.

36.—*mountain-nymph.* Inhabitants of mountainous countries are proverbially lovers of liberty.

40.—*unreprovèd:* unreprovable.

45–48. The sense of this passage has been much disputed. The chief interpretations are these:—(1) That it is the lark that comes. But it has been pointed out that it is not true to nature to make a lark come to a window, and some have instanced this as an example of Milton's inaccuracy in natural description. The

grammar also is unsatisfactory under this interpretation, *to* being unnecessary: *hear the lark begin . . . to come . . . and bid.* Again, if the lark is meant, why *in spite of sorrow?* (2) That L'Allegro is already out walking, and comes to the cottage window and bids good-morrow from the outside. *To come* would then be coördinate with *to live* (ver. 39) and *to hear* (ver. 41). This is M.'s view. (3) That L'Allegro, hearing the song of the lark, rises and comes to the window to bid good-morrow to whatever may be outside as he looks out through the vines. The grammatical construction according to this view is the same as in (2), and this has the advantage of making the succeeding barnyard scene a natural sequence.

The following couplet from Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas (p. 70) a book well-known to Milton, is worth noting in this connection:

> The cheerful birds, chirping him sweet good morrow,
> With Nature's music do beguile his sorrow.

The passage is noted by C. Dunster in *Considerations on Milton's Early Reading*, etc., Lond., 1800, p. 62.

48.—*eglantine.* Milton is not exact here. Eglantine is really the same as sweet-briar, and is not twisting. It has been suggested that he means honeysuckle.

50.—The figure seems to be that of the rear of a retreating army scattering before the trumpet blast of the enemy, and to be mock-heroic in its application to the strutting fowl.

57.—*not unseen.* "Happy men love witnesses of their joy" (Hurd, quoted by M.).

60.—*state:* stately progress (Keightley).

62.—*liveries:* used not merely in the sense of "dress," but of the dress *delivered* by a lord to his retinue, and so suggesting the idea of the clouds as retainers of the sun in his stately progress. *dight:* arrayed.

67.—*tells his tale:* counts his number (of sheep).

70.—*landskip:* an older spelling of "landscape," the suffix being the same as in friend*ship*, wor*ship*, etc.

71.—*fallows:* ploughed land unsown; originally, "pale-colored," as in *fallow-deer.*

75.—*pied:* variegated, like a (mag)pie.

78.—*bosomed:* surrounded breast-high.

79.—*lies:* dwells.

80.—*cynosure:* literally, "dog's tail," a name given to that part of the constellation of the Lesser Bear in which the polestar is situated, whence the present use in the sense of an object to which all eyes are directed. Cf. *Comus*, ver. 342 and note.

83–8.—*Corydon and Thyrsis ... Phyllis ... Thestylis:* typical names of peasants in the pastoral poetry of Theocritus and Vergil.

85.—*messes:* dishes.

87.—*bower:* chamber.

91.—*secure:* used in the literal sense of "free from care."

92.—*upland:* remote from towns.

94.—*rebeck:* a musical instrument now obsolete, which resembled a fiddle, but had fewer strings.

96.—*chequered: i. e.*, with the sun shining through the spaces between the leaves.

100.—*spicy.* The practice of flavoring ale and wine with nutmeg and other spices was common.

102.—*Faery Mab.* See *Romeo and Juliet*, I, iv, 54-95, and Shelley's *Queen Mab.* M. quotes Jonson's *Satyr*, beginning:

> This is Mab, the mistress Fairy,
> That doth nightly rob the dairy.

junkets: originally, a kind of cream-cheese (wrapt in rushes, from Italian *giunco*, a rush), and now most commonly used of curds and cream.

103.—*pinched.* This was the usual sign of the anger of the fairies. Cf. the sufferings of Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, V, v, 96, 103-105.

103, 4.—*she . . . he:* individuals in the company.

104.—*Friar's lantern.* The allusion is to the *ignis fatuus*, known by various popular names, such as "Will-o'-the-wisp," "Jack o' Lanthorn," etc. *Friar's* has, in all probability, no connection with Friar Rush, a demon of folk-lore who was disguised as a friar. Scott, however, as the *New English Dictionary* notes, has confused the two, probably misinterpreting Milton:—

> Better we had through mire and bush
> Been lanthorn-led by Friar Rush.
>
> —*Marmion*, IV, 1.

104, 5.—The punctuation here is that of the first edition, making *he* the subject of *tells*. If this is thought to crowd the sense too much, the reading of the second edition may be taken, with a period after *led*, and the subject of *tells* to be supplied.

105–114.—Cf. Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, I, ii, 1, 2, (quoted by Warton and others):—"A bigger kind there is of them [*i. e.*, spirits] called with us hobgoblins and Robin Goodfellows, that would in these superstitious times grind corn for a mess of milk, cut wood, or do any manner of drudgery work."

110.—*lubber:* clumsy, doltish.

111.—*chimney:* fireplace.

113.—*crop:* here used for "stomach."

117.—M. thinks that what follows is meant to suggest merely L'Allegro's evening reading. But it seems more naturally taken as describing actual experiences in the city, just as the previous passage has described actual country sights. In a poem dealing with a series of typical occupations, there is no need to make it possible to fit them into a practicable time-table for one day, and it is no objection that no means are provided to transport L'Allegro to the town.

120.—*weeds:* garments. There are two *weeds* in English. In what modern phrase do we find the one here used? *triumphs:* pageants, spectacles.

121.—*store:* abundance.

122.—*influence.* The original use of this word had reference to the astrological belief in the power of the stars over human destiny. The easy comparison of bright eyes to stars strengthens the suggestion that the poet had the original sense of the word in mind here.

123.—The references are to contests in poetry and to tournaments, in both of which ladies were accustomed to award the prize.

124.—*her: i. e.*, the presiding lady—Queen of Love, Queen of the Tourney, or whatever her title might be for the particular occasion.

125-8.—Milton has in mind the court masques which reached their highest degree of splendor in the reigns of James I. and Charles I. See Introduction, pp. 34 ff.

125.—*Hymen:* the God of Marriage, a common figure in masques, since they were frequently presented on the occasion of the marriages of nobles. Cf. *As You Like It*, V, iv, 113 ff., and Ben Jonson's *Masque of Hymen.*

126.—*saffron.* In the masques, Hymen appeared in a yellow robe.

132, 3.—Milton here points out the familiar contrast between the learning shown in Jonson's plays, and the spontaneity and natural genius of Shakspere's. On the ground of the comparatively faint praise given here to Shakspere, and of one or two other passages equally doubtful, some have based the opinion that Milton had an inadequate appreciation of Shakspere.

132.—*sock.* The *soccus* was the low-heeled slipper worn by actors in the classical comedy, as opposed to the high-heeled buskin used in tragedy. Cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 102.

133.—*Fancy:* used in the wider sense of "Imagination."

135.—Note that these lines describing L'Allegro's musical diversions are the most melodious in the poem.

136.—*Lydian.* The three "modes" of ancient music were the Dorian, the Phrygian, and the Lydian, characterized respectively by stateliness, liveliness, and softness.

138.—*meeting:* responsive. *Soul* is the object of *pierce.*

139—*bout:* literally, a "bend" or "round;" here, a "passage."

141.—Note the apparent contradiction between adjectives and nouns. The adjectives describe the appearance of unconsciousness in a work of art where the perfection is shown in the concealment of the pains taken. The figure used here is called *oxymoron.*

142-4.—"The accompanied voice is meant, otherwise there would be melody, but not harmony" (B.).

145.—*Orpheus:* the famous mythical poet and musician, who, when his wife Eurydice died, descended into Hades, and so charmed by his music the rulers of the underworld that he was permitted to take his wife away with him, on condition that he should not gaze around him as he returned through the shades. But, just as he was leaving, he looked behind, and Eurydice had to remain—hence *quite* and *half-regained.*

147.—*Elysian.* In the Greek mythology, the Elysian fields were the abode of the blessed after death.

149.—*Pluto:* the god of the underworld.

IL PENSEROSO

Title—The statement made by Mark Pattison that Milton was mistaken as to both the form and the meaning of this word has been disproved by W. H. David (*Notes and Queries*, 7th series, VIII, 326). The word is

correct Italian of the seventeenth century, and means "pensive" or "meditative."

3.—*bested'* (or *bestead*): help, avail.

6.—*fond:* foolish, the original meaning. *possess:* take possession of, enter into. The object of *possess* is *fancies*.

6-9.—The *gaudy shapes* are most like to *dreams*.

10.—*pensioners:* retinue.

14.—*hit*: meet, agree with, be tolerable to.

15.—*weaker:* the comparative used in the sense of "too weak."

17, 18.—*i. e.*, though she seems black, yet her beauty is as estimable as befits the sister of Memnon.

18.—*Memnon:* the Ethiopian prince, famous for his beauty, who fought for Troy (*Odyssey*, xi, 552). His sister, Hemera, is mentioned by Dictys, but the fact of her beauty seems to have been inferred by Milton from Homer's statement about Memnon.

19.—*starred Ethiop queen:* Cassiopeia, who boasted that she (or, according to a common version, her daughter Andromeda) was more beautiful than the Nereids. These latter persuaded Poseidon to send floods and a monster to ravage the land. Andromeda was given up to the monster in atonement, but was rescued by Perseus. Both mother and daughter were afterwards placed among the constellations: hence *starred*.

23.—*Vesta:* the goddess of the hearth. In her worship special stress was laid on purity.

24, 5.—*Saturn.* This god was reputed the founder of civilization. The derivation of Melancholy from Purity and Solitude or Culture, is, like the second one suggested for Euphrosyne in *L'Allegro*, of the poet's own manufacture. Milton probably also had in mind the astrological belief that the influence of Saturn made men morose. (Cf. *Saturnine.*) *Saturn's reign* is the fabled golden age.

29.—*Ida:* the mountain in Crete where Jupiter was reared.

30.—Jupiter (Zeus), according to the myth, overthrew Saturn (Cronus).

33.—*grain:* originally a small seed, but used especially of the insect *coccus* from which the red cochineal dye is made. Hence "to dye in grain" meant to dye a fast color, in *Comus*, ver. 750, red, but here and in *Par. Lost*, XI, 242, 3, probably a dark purple.

35.—*stole:* sometimes a long robe, or, in ecclesiastical vestments, a scarf, but here more probably in the sense of a veil or hood, since her robe has already been mentioned. *cypress:* (probably from *Cyprus*, the island in the Mediterranean, *New English Dictionary*) made of cypress or crape. *lawn:* a fine linen.

36.—*decent:* comely.

37.—*state:* stateliness, dignity.

39.—*commercing:* having intercourse.

40.—*rapt:* originally past participle of verb *rap*, to transport.

41.—*still.* Adjective or adverb?

43.—*sad:* serious, rather than "sorrowful." "Leaden was the Saturnian colour" (M.). *cast:* turn of the eyes, gaze.

44.—*i. e.*, fix your eyes as fast on earth as formerly on heaven.

45-8.—Milton here implies his favorite doctrine of the necessity of temperance for the highest inspiration.

47, 8.—"The Muses haunt the hill of Helicon, mighty and divine, and dance with tender feet around the fountain and the altar of the great son of Kronion" (Hesiod's *Theogony*—quoted by V.).

52-4.—See *Ezekiel* X. The name *Contemplation* seems to have been given to the Cherub by Milton. To the

Cherubim was attributed knowledge, to the Seraphim, love.

55.—*hist.* This may be (1) an imperative in the sense of "bring silently," or (2) a past participle in the sense of "hushed," *silence* being then an object of *bring*, ver. 51.

56.—*Philomel.* Philomela, daughter of Pandion, King of Attica, was changed into a nightingale in order to save her from Tereus, her brother-in-law.

57.—*plight:* mood.

59.—*Cynthia:* Diana, who was born on Mt. Cynthus in Delos. The moon is here represented as checking her car to listen to the nightingale singing in its haunt in the oak-tree. The attributing of a *dragon yoke* to Diana instead of to Ceres has been regarded as Milton's own transference, but in Dekker's *Song of the Cyclops* in *London's Tempe* (1629) I find

> We shoe the horses of the sun,
> Harness the dragons of the moon,

and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, III, ii, 379,

> For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast.

65.—*unseen:* in direct contrast with *L'All.*, ver. 57.

73.—*plat:* plot.

74.—*curfew:* (Fr. *couvrir*, to cover; *feu*, fire) the bell rung at eight or nine o'clock in the evening as a signal to put out all fires. The practice of ringing the curfew goes back at least to the Conquest, and was meant to prevent risk of conflagration.

78.—*removèd:* remote.

80.—"The light of the fire is so soft as to be a kind of darkness" (V.). "The 'glowing embers' make 'darkness visible'" (T.). The phrase is probably meant to be suggestive rather than exact, and to refer vaguely to the black shadows that throng a fire-lit room.

83.—*bellman:* the night-watchman who used to patrol the city streets, keeping order, and announcing the hours

and the state of the weather. The kind of charms they recited may be gathered from Herrick's verses:—

> From noise of scare-fires rest ye free,
> From murders Benedicitie.
> From all mischances, that may fright
> Your pleasing slumbers in the night:
> Mercie secure ye all, and keep
> The Goblin from ye, while ye sleep.
> Past one o'clock, and almost two,
> My masters all, *Good day to you.*
>
> —Grosart's ed. of Herrick, Lond., 1876, II, 28.

84.—*nightly:* by night (not "every night").

87.—*i. e.*, all night, as the Bear never sets, but disappears only with the coming of daylight.

88.—*with:* studying Hermes Trismegistus (*i. e., thrice great*), the fabled Egyptian philosopher and king, had ascribed to him a number of forged writings, and was credited with the invention of magic and the black arts generally. *unsphere:* call from the sphere it now inhabits.

89–96.—The references here are to the subjects discussed in Plato's *Phaedo*. The whole passage means simply that Il Penseroso would enjoy sitting up all night reading Hermes and Plato.

93.—Some such word as "tell" should be understood before *of those*. *Demons:* the spirits inhabiting the four elements, fire, air, earth, and water, into which the Greek and Medieval philosophers divided the material universe.

95.—*consent:* agreement, influence. The reference is to astrology.

98.—*sceptred:* because tragedy dealt with the calamities of princes. *pall:* "Lat. *palla*, the mantle worn by tragic actors" (V.).

99, 100.—The chief subjects of Greek tragedy were drawn from the stories of the royal house of Thebes, the descendants of Pelops, and the Trojan War.

101, 2.—A somewhat slighting reference to the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. For *buskined* cf. *L'All.*, ver. 131 and note.

104.—*Musæus:* a mythical singer, sometimes said to be the son of Orpheus.

105–8.—See note on *L'All.*, ver. 145-150.

109–15.—The references here are to the Squire's Tale, which Chaucer left unfinished. Cambuscan (which Chaucer accented on the last syllable) is a corrupted form of Genghis Khan, the name of the eastern ruler at whose court the story opens. Camball and Algarsife were his sons, and Canace his daughter. Canace received gifts of a ring that enabled her to understand the language of birds and to know the medicinal properties of plants, and a mirror in which one's future could be seen. Cambuscan himself received a horse of brass which, by the turning of a pin, would bear the rider any distance he pleased in twenty-four hours, and a sword which would cut through anything, and the wounds from which could be cured only by being stroked by the flat of the sword itself.

113.—*virtuous:* having virtue or exceptional power.

116.—The allusion best fits Spenser and the *Faerie Queene.* The plural *bards* may be meant to include other writers of chivalrous poetry, such as Tasso and Ariosto.

120.—A reference to the allegory in the *Faerie Queene* and similar works.

122.—*civil-suited:* quietly dressed, *i. e.*, in plain citizen garb, as differing from court or military dress (M.).

123.—*tricked:* adorned. *frounced:* with hair curled.

124.—*the Attic boy:* Cephalus, grandson of the King of Attica, whom Eos, goddess of the Dawn, carried off on account of his beauty.

125.—With a cloud worn like a kerchief on her head.

127.—*ushered:* attended, shown in. *Still* is an adj. here.

130.—*minute-drops:* drops falling at intervals of a minute.

134.—*brown:* used for "dark," without emphasis on particular color. *Sylvan:* Silvanus, the old Italian god of woods and fields.

135.—*monumental:* memorial of past times, with the additional idea of "massiveness."

140.—*profaner.* This is sometimes taken as equivalent to "too profane," like the Latin absolute comparative. Cf. *weaker* in ver. 15.

141.—*garish:* staring.

145.—*consort:* so spelled means strictly "partner." But the word was often confused with "concert," and may be so here, in the sense of "harmony."

147–50.—This passage is very obscure, and no satisfactory interpretation has yet been offered. V. paraphrases thus:—"Let some dream float with undulating motion, (*i. e.*, *wave*) at the wings of Sleep, amid a stream of vivid pictures which rest lightly on the eyelids." But the use of *at* is peculiar, and it is not clear that *his* in ver. 148 refers to *sleep* and not to *dream.* Dunster here again quotes from Sylvester a passage which Milton seems to have had in mind:—

> Confusedly about the silent bed,
> Fantastic swarms of dreams there hovered,
> Green, red, and yellow, tawny, black, and blue;
> They make no noise but right resemble may
> Th' unnumber'd moats that in the sunbeams play.
>
> —*Considerations on Milton's Early Reading,* etc., p. 70.

154.—*Genius:* guardian spirit.

155.—*due.* His feet are *due* in the cloister in the sense that it is the appropriate place for such a man. Cf. *Comus,* ver. 11. But Keightley explains it thus, "Denoting that it was his constant resort," and he has been much quoted.

156.—*pale:* enclosed place. *Cloister* has also literally this meaning, but Milton had in mind the special application of the word to the covered walks in the English Colleges.

157.—*love.* We have to supply a new subject here: let *me* love. *embowèd:* vaulted.

158.—*antique.* If we retain Milton's own spelling, *antick*, the meaning would be "fancifully ornamented." *massy-proof:* proof against mass, *i. e.*, able to bear the weight.

159.—*storied:* painted with (Scripture) histories. *dight:* decorated. Cf. *L'All.*, ver. 62.

161–6.—If we suppose this poem to be an indication of Milton's personal tastes, we see that at this time he was far from feeling the antagonism towards the ritual of the Church which he shows later in his prose writings. See Introduction, p. 47.

169.—*hairy gown:* the coarse dress of the hermit.

170.—*spell:* study laboriously.

171.—*of.* The sense would be unaltered by the omission of this preposition. It may be taken as equivalent to "about."

COMUS

For the occasion and the actors, see Introduction, pp. 33 ff.

Title.—*Comus.* The name is from a Greek word meaning "revel" or "band of revelers." The personification as the God of Mirth belongs to late classical mythology. He had already appeared in English literature in Jonson's masque of *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1619), and still earlier in French. *presented:* represented, acted. *discovers:* reveals, the usual technical term for displaying a scene on the stage.

1ff.—This opening speech by the Attendant Spirit serves as a sort of prologue to explain the situation.

2.—*those: i. e.*, those well known.

3.—*insphered.* It has been questioned whether this means "each in his separate star," or refers to the spheres of the Ptolemaic system. But perhaps it is better taken as merely "surrounded by regions," etc.

7.—*pestered:* clogged, hampered. *pinfold:* properly "a pound for cattle:" here, "a narrow enclosure."

8.—*this mortal change.* The "change by death" is the meaning that first strikes one, but the use of *this* inclines us to accept M.'s explanation, "this mortal state of life."

11.—*gods:* saints in the company of God.

12.—*due.* Cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 155 and note.

16.—*ambrosial:* heavenly, as ambrosia was the food of the gods. For *weeds*, cf. *L'All.*, ver. 120 and note.

17.—*mould:* earth, rather than the human form he is wearing.

18–23.—When Saturn's empire was divided, Neptune was assigned the Sea, Jupiter Heaven, Pluto Hades; hence *nether Jove* = Pluto.

23.—*unadorned: i. e.*, otherwise unadorned.

25.—*i. e.*, each island to its own governing deity.

29.—*quarters:* assigns. *blue-haired:* from the color of the sea. V. notes that this was the conventional color of sea-nymphs' hair in the masques, and Bell (quoted by T.) traces the epithet back to Ovid.

30.—*this tract:* Wales.

31.—*peer:* the Earl of Bridgewater, to celebrate whose installation as Lord President of Wales, *Comus* was produced. *mickle:* great. The word survives in Scottish.

33.—*i. e.*, of course, the Welsh.

35.—*state:* referring to the ceremony of installation. Cf. *L'All.*, ver. 60 and note.

37.—*perplexed:* entangled.

38.—*horror:* used with the classical connotation of "rough," "shaggy," "bristling."

45.—*hall or bower:* in the general assemblage in the hall of state, or in the lady's chamber.

43-5.—V. takes this as a claim to originality for the whole work, but it seems rather to be an admission that the character and parentage of *Comus* are of Milton's own invention.

48.—The reference is to the story of Bacchus, who, sailing to Naxos, was seized and bound by the sailors, who intended to sell him as a slave. But he freed himself from his fetters, turned the masts and oars into serpents and himself into a lion, while the sailors went mad, jumped overboard, and were changed into dolphins. *transformed:* note the Latinism in the use of the past participle.

49.—*Tyrrhene shore:* the western shore of the central part of Italy.

49.—*listed:* willed.

55.—The association of ivy with Bacchus was traditional. Cf. *L'All.*, ver. 16.

59.—*frolic . . . age:* rejoicing in his prime.

60.—*Celtic and Iberian fields:* France and Spain.

65.—*orient.* The associations which the word carries are of brightness, richness, and mystery.

66.—*drouth:* dryness, thirst.

67.—*fond:* foolish. Cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 6 and note.

69.—*express:* complete and exact.

71.—*ounce:* a kind of lynx.

77.—In Homer's account of Circe, the minds of the victims remain unchanged. This gives greater pathos, but Milton's version implies greater degradation.

83.—*Iris:* the goddess of the rainbow.

84.—*weeds.* Cf. *L'All.*, ver. 120 and note.

86.—This is usually interpreted as a compliment to Lawes, who wrote the music for the masque.

87.—*knows to still:* another Latinism. Cf. *Lyc.*, ver. 10, 11, "He knew Himself to sing."

88.—*nor . . . faith:* nor less faithful than skilful in music.

89–91.—He explains his choice of a disguise by saying that as a shepherd his appearance will be plausible in this place where he has to be at hand to give assistance.

92.—*viewless*: invisible.

Stage direction.—*rout:* unruly crowd.

93.—*star:* the evening star, Hesperus. *fold:* the verb from *fold*, a sheep pen.

96.—*allay:* cool.

97.—*steep:* deep, or descriptive of the rising appearance of the sea seen from the shore. *stream:* the ancients regarded the Atlantic as a great stream flowing round the earth.

98.—*slope:* that has sloped down below the horizon.

100, 1. Critics usually quote *Psalm* XIX, 4, 5, "In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber."

105.—*rosy twine:* wreaths of roses.

110.—*saws:* maxims.

112.—*starry quire:* referring to the belief that the spheres make music as they move. *Quire* is the older spelling of *choir*. From the next line it appears that the spirits inhabiting the spheres are meant.

115.—*sounds:* straits, the geographical term.

116.—*morrice:* morrice or Moorish dance.

118.—*pert:* smart. *dapper:* neat, dainty.

121.—*wakes:* night watches.

129.—*Cottyto:* a Thracian goddess of debauchery, whose licentious rites were celebrated by night.

131.—*called:* invoked. *dragon-womb:* "alluding perhaps to the idea that the chariot of the night was drawn by dragons" (V.) or "that the womb of darkness breeds monsters" (T.). Cf. note to *Il Pens.*, ver. 59.

132.—*Stygian:* of the underworld; from *Styx*, one of the four rivers of Hades. *spets:* spits.

135.—*Hecat':* Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft, often confused with the goddess of Hades.

139.—*nice:* fastidious, prudish (used sneeringly). *Indian steep:* the eastern ascent of the heavens.

140.—*cabined.* "Confined," "narrow," is the usual meaning, but it does not seem very appropriate here. The phrase is perhaps better understood as equivalent to "the loop-hole of her cabin," the *cabined* being used merely to make *loop-hole* more vivid, but not to be emphasized itself.

144.—*round:* a country dance.

Stage direction. — *The Measure: i. e.*, the dance takes place here.

147.—*shrouds:* covers, hiding places. *brakes:* brushwood, undergrowth.

151.—*trains:* snares.

154.—*spongy:* that can hold the spells as a sponge holds water.

156.—*blear illusion:* illusion that makes bleared or dim. *presentments:* pictures, appearances.

157.—*quaint habits:* odd garments.

159.—*course:* plan of action.

161.—*glozing:* flattering, deceptive.

163.—*wind:* creep like a serpent, insinuate myself into his bosom.

165.—*virtue:* power. Cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 113, "virtuous ring."

167.—Keeps awake about his country affairs.

168.—*fairly:* quietly. "Fair and softly" was a common phrase meaning "gently."

172.—*ill-managed:* uncontrolled.

175.—*teeming:* fruitful. *granges:* granaries.

176.—*loose:* loose-mannered, without polite restraint. *hinds:* peasants. *Pan:* the god of shepherds and of country life generally.

177.—*amiss:* in the wrong way, for they misuse their gifts.

178.—*swilled insolence:* insolence caused by swilling or drinking freely.

179.—*wassailers:* carousers, from *wassail,* to drink a health.

180.—*inform:* get information or direction for.

189.—*sad:* serious. *votarist:* one who has taken a vow. *palmer:* one who bears a palm-branch in token of having been to the Holy Land (Skeat).

190.—*wain:* wagon.

193.—*engaged:* entangled.

203.—*rife:* abundant. *perfect:* quite distinct.

205.—*single:* perfect, complete, unmixed.

210.—*may startle well:* may indeed startle.

212.—*strong-siding:* taking one's side strongly.

214.—*girt:* surrounded, or simply, "furnished with."

215.—*Chastity.* We expect "charity," to complete the Pauline trinity, but Milton uses this device to emphasize chastity, the main theme of the poem.

219.—*glistering:* shining. Cf. *Lyc.*, ver. 79.

225.—*casts:* grammatically coördinate with *does* rather than with *turn.*

231.—*airy shell:* the atmosphere.

232.—*Meander:* a river in Asia Minor, whose winding course has given us the word "meander." *margent:* margin.

237.—*Narcissus:* a beautiful youth whom Echo loved in vain, so that she pined away in grief till nothing was left of her but her voice.

241.—*Parley:* conversation. *daughter of the sphere:* the reference in *sphere* may be to the *airy shell* of ver. 231, or

to a theory that echo had "her origin from the reverberation of the music of the spheres." Editors cf. Milton's *At a Solemn Music*, ver. 2, "Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse."

243.—Add the beauty of repetition to the music of the spheres.

247.—*vocal: i. e.*, which carries the voice.

248.—*his:* for "its," *i. e.* of "something holy."

251.—*fall:* cadence.

253.—*Sirens:* the nymphs described in the *Odyssey* and elsewhere, who lured mariners to their death by their singing.

254.—*flowery-kirtled:* with garments made of, or adorned with, flowers. The naiads were properly nymphs of fresh water.

257.—*Elysium:* see note to *L'All.*, ver. 147. *Scylla:* a monster with a bark like that of a whelp, (hence *barking* in ver. 258) afterwards identified with rocks on the Italian side of the Straits of Messina.

259.—*Charybdis:* the whirlpool on the Sicilian side of the Straits of Messina.

262.—*homefelt:* felt *home*, keenly, intimately.

263.—*waking: i. e.*, as contrasted with the dreamy pleasure given by the sirens.

267.—*unless:* supply "thou be."

268.—*Sylvan:* Silvanus. See *Il Pens.*, ver. 134, note.

271.—*ill is lost:* is unfortunately lost, a Latinism.

273.—*extreme shift:* last resort.

277–90.—This dialogue in alternate single lines is in imitation of classical tragedy.

279.—*near-ushering:* going immediately before.

285.—*forestalling:* coming sooner than was expected.

286.—*hit:* guess.

287.—Is their loss important?

290.—*Hebe:* cup-bearer of the gods, goddess of youth. Cf. *L'All.*, ver. 29.

291.—*what time.* Cf. *Lyc.*, ver. 28 and note. *labour-ed:* tired with labour.

293.—*swinked:* tired with toil (A. S., *swincan*, to labour). *hedger:* a man who mends hedges, a farm labourer. This method of noting time is according to classical tradition, though the local color is English.

294.—*mantling:* covering (as with a mantle).

297.—*port:* bearing.

299.—*element:* air, sky.

301.—*plighted:* folded. This *plight* is really the same word as *plait* (Lat. *plicare*, to fold) and is to be distinguished from the word of Teutonic origin, *plight*, obligation, as in *troth-plight*. *strook:* obsolete form of *struck*.

303.—*i. e.*, to be undertaken as eagerly, with such bliss at the end. Note the studiously flattering tone of Comus's references to the brothers.

312.—*dingle:* a narrow valley or dell.

313.—*bosky:* bushy. *bourn:* stream; more familiar in the northern form *burn*.

314.—*ancient:* long familiar.

315.—*stray attendance:* strayed attendants, abstract for concrete.

316.—*shroud:* are sheltered. Cf. ver. 147 and note.

317.—*low-roosted:* because it builds on the ground.

318.—*thatched pallet:* in reference to the woven grasses with which the lark lines its nest.

318.—*rouse.* This may be taken as an intransitive use, ="rise," or *lark* may be regarded as its object, and *morrow* as its subject (M.).

321.—*further quest:* till further search is made.

325.—In reference to the derivation of *courtesy* from *court*.

327.—*less warranted:* giving less assurance of safety. The general sense is: This place is so insecure that there is no risk that a change would be for the worse.

329.—*square:* make fit or sufficient.

332.—*wont'st:* art accustomed. *benison:* benediction, blessing.

334.—*disinherit:* dispossess. So *inherit* is common in Shaksperean English without the idea of succession.

338.—*rush candle:* candle with the pith of a rush for a wick. *wicker hole:* "the wretched wicker-crossed aperture, not worth the name of a window" (M.).

340.—*rule.* The figure is from a rule for drawing straight lines.

341.—*Star . . . Cynosure.* Callisto, daughter of the King of Arcady, was turned into the constellation of the Greater Bear, and her son Arcas into that of the Lesser Bear. Greek sailors steered by the Greater Bear, and Phœnician (including those of Tyre) by the Lesser, in which is situated the polestar. For *Cynosure*, see *L'All.*, ver. 80, note.

344.—*wattled cotes:* sheep-pens enclosed by hurdles made of interwoven branches.

345.—Cf. *Lyc.*, ver. 188 and note.

349.—*innumerous:* innumerable.

355.—*head.* It seems better to take *head* as subject of *leans* than to supply "she."

358.—*hunger:* of wild beasts; *heat:* of human lust.

359.—*over-exquisite:* too curious, running too much into subtle detail.

360.—*cast:* forecast, foretell.

366.—*to seek:* at a loss.

367.—*unprincipled:* ignorant of the principles.

368.—*bosoms:* embosoms, holds in her heart.

369.—*single:* mere.

372.—*plight:* condition, from the same source as *plighted* in ver. 301, on which see note.

376—*seeks to:* has recourse to.

379.—*resort:* places of resort.

380.—*to-ruffled.* This prefix *to-* meant first "in pieces" as in *to-broken*, then it became merely intensive as here, where the meaning is "much ruffled."

382.—*centre: i. e.*, of the earth.

386.—*affects:* loves.

390.—*weeds:* cf. *L'All.*, ver. 120 and note. *beads:* rosary: originally, "prayers," then "little balls for counting prayers."

393.—*Hesperian tree:* the tree that bore the golden apples, presented to Hera by Gaea on her marriage with Zeus. It was guarded by the daughters of Hesperus, and by a dragon (ver. 395) which Hercules slew in his labour of obtaining the Hesperian apples.

395.—*unenchanted:* not able to be enchanted.

398.—*unsunned:* kept in the dark.

401.—*wink on:* shut its eyes to.

404.—*it recks me not:* I do not trouble about.

406.—*ill-greeting:* rude.

407.—*unowned:* unmarried or unprotected.

408.—*infer:* reason.

413.—*squint:* not straightforward.

419.—*if:* even if.

423.—*unharboured:* without shelters. The original sense of *harbour* was "army-shelter," and had nothing to do with the sea.

424.—*Infamous.* The accent is on the second syllable.

426.—*trace:* trace her way through.

426.—*bandite:* Milton's spelling of "bandit."

430.—*unblenched.* This word combines the notions of "unfaltering," and "not made pale by fear."

432, 3.—Cf. *L'All.*, ver. 104 and note.

434.—*unlaid.* To "lay" a ghost is to pacify or charm him so that he ceases to walk.

435.—*curfew.* Cf. *Il. Pens.*, ver. 74, note. From curfew to cock-crow was the period when ghosts were supposed to be permitted to walk.

436—*swart . . . mine.* Popular superstition peopled mines with spirits of earth called "gnomes."

443.—*brinded:* brindled, streaked, literally "branded."

447.—*Gorgon.* The head of Medusa, the only one of the three Gorgons who was mortal, retained its petrifying power even after it was cut off by Perseus and placed in the shield of Athene. The moral interpretation of the myths of Diana's invulnerability by Cupid and of the Gorgon shield is Milton's own.

451.—*dashed:* suddenly checked.

452.—*blank:* sheer.

455.—*lackey:* wait on.

459.—*oft converse:* frequent intercourse.

460.—*begin:* subjunctive mood. Note that the indicative is used in *turns* (ver. 462), as if, according to M., to show increased certainty.

468.—*imbodies and imbrutes:* becomes fleshly and brutish.

469.—*property:* peculiar quality.

463–75.—Warton notes that Milton here paraphrases a passage from Plato's *Phaedo.*

471.—*charnel:* burial.

474.—*sensualty.* It is necessary to retain Milton's spelling here for the sake of the metre.

479.—*nectared:* heavenly. Cf. *ambrosial* in ver. 16 and note.

480.—*crude:* unrefined.

483.—*night-foundered:* lost in the night.

491.—*iron stakes: i. e.,* their swords.

494.—*Thyrsis:* a traditional pastoral name.

495.—*huddling:* either hastening, or with the sense of heaping up its waters through delaying. *madrigal:* a kind of pastoral song. The passage is obviously meant as a compliment to Lawes, who acted Thyrsis, in his own character as a musician. Note that ver. 495-512

rhyme in couplets, the rest of the poem (except the lyrics) being in blank verse.

501.—*next:* nearest, dearest.

502.—*toy:* trifle. Cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 4.

503.—*stealth:* the abstract noun from *steal.*

506.—*to:* compared to.

508.—*how chance:* how chances it? According to V., it is a combination of this construction and the adverbial "by what chance?"

509.—*sadly:* seriously.

516.—*Storied.* Cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 154.

517.—*chimeras:* fire-breathing monsters, part lion, part serpent, and part goat.

520.—*navel:* centre.

521.—*immured:* walled in.

526.—*murmurs:* muttered charms.

529.—*mintage:* stamp, imprint.

530.—*charactered:* marked, engraved, stamped.

531.—*crofts:* small fields.

532.—*that . . . glade:* overhanging this deep wooded valley.

533.—*monstrous rout:* band of monsters.

534.—*stabled:* in their lairs.

535.—*Hecate:* goddess of witchcraft. Cf. ver. 135 and note.

539.—*unweeting:* unwitting.

542.—*besprent:* besprinkled.

547.—*meditate:* practise (imitated from Vergil). Cf. *Lyc.*, ver. 66 and note.

548.—*ere a close:* before I had finished a song.

552.—*i. e.*, when Comus hushed his revellers at the lady's approach.

553. *drowsy-flighted.* This is the reading of the Cambridge MS., and is preferred by M. and others, who take it as meaning "flying drowsily." Milton's early printed

editions have "drowsie frighted," *i. e.*, *drowsy*, as being the horses of the chariot of sleep, and *frighted* by the noise of Comus and his rout.

558.—*took.* This is usually explained as "charmed," a common Shaksperean usage, which fits the context. On the other hand, the phrase *took ere she was ware* may mean merely "taken unawares," "surprised."

559, 60.—*be . . . displaced:* cease to exist, if her place could be always taken by such sounds.

565.—*amazed:* confounded, not merely "astonished" as in modern English.

573.—*prevent.* Here it probably includes the etymological sense of "anticipate."

585.—*period:* sentence.

591.—After *meant* supply "to be" or "to do."

592.—*happy trial:* trial which will result happily.

597.—*pillared:* referring to the ancient belief as to the manner in which the heavens were supported.

604.—*Acheron:* one of the rivers of the lower world. Used here for the infernal regions in general.

605.—*Harpies:* monstrous creatures in Greek mythology, half woman and half bird. *Hydras.* The Hydra was the many-headed serpent slain by Hercules.

607.—*purchase:* acquisition, prize, prey.

610.—*emprise:* poetical form of "enterprise."

611.—*stead:* service, assistance.

614.—*unthread:* unstring, loosen.

617.—*relation:* tale. *shifts:* skilful devices.

620.—*to see to:* to look at. The editors attempt to identify this shepherd lad with Milton's early friend Diodati, who taught him botany, and on the occasion of whose death Milton wrote the Latin *Epitaphium Damonis.*

621.—*virtuous:* see note on ver. 165, and cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 113 and note.

626.—*scrip:* bag.

627.—*simples:* medicinal herbs, originally *single* ingredients in compounded drugs.

634.—*like esteemed: i. e.*, likewise unesteemed.

636.—*Moly:* the name of the plant in the passage in Homer here alluded to (*Odyssey*, x).

637.—To enable him to resist the spells of Circe.

638.—*Hæmony:* a name that appears to have been invented by Milton from Hæmonia or Thessaly, the land of magic.

639.—*sovran:* literally, "supreme;" here, "of the highest efficacy."

641.—*Furies:* goddesses of vengeance.

Stage direction.—*goes about:* makes an attempt.

642.—*pursed it up:* put it away in my purse.

661.—*Daphne:* a maiden who was pursued by Apollo, and, at her own request, turned into a bay-tree. The syntax here is loose, but easily intelligible.

672.—*julep:* from a Persian word meaning "rose-water;" here, "a sweet drink."

673.—*his:* its.

675.—*Nepenthes:* cf. *Odyssey*, iv, 219–226: — "Then Helen, daughter of Zeus . . . . cast a drug into the wine whereof they drank, a drug to lull all pain and anger, and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow. Whoso should drink a draught thereof, when it is mingled in the bowl, on that day he would let no tear fall down his cheeks, not though his mother and father died, not though men slew his brother or dear son with the sword before his face, and his own eyes beheld it." (Butcher and Lang's translation.)

685.—*unexempt condition:* condition from which no mortal is exempt.

688.—*that.* The antecedent is *you* in ver. 682.

694.—*aspects:* appearances, sights.

695.—*ugly:* Milton's spelling is *oughly*.

698.—*vizored:* wearing a mask.

700.—*liquorish:* tempting to the appetite.

707.—*budge.* The word has two meanings: (1) a kind of fur, (2) stout, pompous, surly. The second one is not found elsewhere as early as the date of *Comus*, and the use of *fur* in the same line supports the view that (1) is meant. If so, it is probably an allusion to the fur used on academic gowns, here suggested by *doctors.*

708.—*Cynic tub:* in reference to the tub in which Diogenes the Cynic philosopher is said to have lived. The Stoic and the Cynic philosophers are alluded to here on account of their contempt for the pleasures of the senses.

714.—*but all:* except merely. *sate:* satisfy. *curious:* dainty, critical (V.); perhaps with a shade of the sense of "inquisitive," "eager to try new sensations."

719.—*hutched:* enclosed.

722.—*frieze:* a coarse woolen cloth.

734.—*they below.* Various interpretations have been made of this. (1) If *the deep* = the sea, then *they below* = sea-monsters, or (2) men (V). (3) If *the deep* = the center of the earth, then *they below* = gnomes (T).

735.—*inured:* hardened, accustomed.

737.—*coy:* bashful or disdainful—at this period without the implication of affectation. *cozened:* cheated.

750.—*sorry grain:* wretched hue. Cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 33, note.

751.—*sampler:* a pattern piece of needlework. *tease:* to comb or card wool, scratch or raise the nap of cloth (Skeat). The modern sense of "irritate" is derived from this.

759.—*pranked:* dressed up.

760.—*bolt:* to separate the flour from the bran, hence, "to refine."

779–806.—This passage is wanting in the earlier MSS. and seems to have been added later.

801.—*set off:* supported by.

804.—*Erebus:* the darkness of the lower world.

805.—*Saturn's crew:* the Titans who supported Saturn against Jupiter.

808.—*canon . . . foundation:* the rules of our company. The figure is from the ecclesiastical laws established by the Papacy and the Church Councils; and the word *foundation* was familiar in connection with endowed institutions such as the Colleges of the Universities.

816, 7.—The idea is, of course, to undo the force of the spells by reversing the process used by Comus.

822.—*Melibœus:* a traditional name for a shepherd in pastoral poetry. The story of Sabrina had been told by Geoffrey of Monmouth, the prose chronicler, and by Sackville, Drayton, Warner, and Spenser. Geoffrey and Spenser have been most frequently identified with Melibœus by the editors.

825.—The masque was performed not far from the Severn.

827.—*Locrine.* Mr. Swinburne has written a tragedy on this subject.

828.—*Brute:* from this legendary *Brutus* medieval writers derived the name *Britain.*

834.—*pearled:* adorned with pearls. The association of pearls with water-divinities was conventional.

835.—*Nereus:* the father of the Nereids or water-nymphs.

838.—*lavers:* baths. *nectared:* "often has much the same force as *ambrosial, i. e.,* fragrant" (V.). In the baths filled with nectar floated asphodels, the flower that grows over the Elysian fields where the blessed dead wander.

845.—*helping:* supply "to cure". *urchin blasts:* influence of wicked elves. *Urchin* is used here in a

sense intermediate between the original one of "hedge-hog" (a beast of ill-omen) and the modern one of "small child."

863.—*amber-dropping hair.* This does not seem to mean anything more difficult than that amber-colored water was dropping from her hair. Several editors, however, suppose that the amber color was reflected from her hair.

870.—*Oceanus:* in Greek mythology, the god of the great river that flowed around the earth. *Tethys:* the wife of Oceanus.

871.—*Nereus'.* Cf. ver. 835 and note.

872.—*Carpathian wizard's hook.* Proteus, the "old man of the sea," had the power of prophecy (whence *wizard*), lived on the island of Carpathos near Crete (whence *Carpathian*), and was the shepherd of the flocks of Amphitrite, *i. e.*, the seals (whence *hook*).

873.—*Triton.* Cf. *Lyc.*, ver. 89 and note.

874.—*Glaucus:* a fisherman of Bœotia who was changed into a sea-god with a gift of prophecy.

875.—*Leucothea:* *i. e.*, the white goddess—the name given to Ino after she had been saved from drowning by the dolphins and had been made a sea-goddess. Homer calls her "Ino of the fair ankles." See next note.

877.—*her son.* When Ino threw herself into the sea to escape from her mad husband, Athamas, she had with her Melicertes, her son, who also was deified as Palæmon.

877.—*Thetis:* the daughter of Nereus and mother of Achilles, always called "silver-footed" by Homer. Milton translates the epithet, using *tinsel* in the sense of "silvery," "flashing."

879.—*Parthenope:* one of the Sirens who was fabled to have been buried near Naples.

880.—*Ligea:* another of the Sirens.

891.—*osier:* the water-willow.

893.—*azurn.* This derivative from *azure* occurs nowhere else.

893–5.—The sense of this passage seems to be that the chariot is inlaid with agate, turquoise, and emerald colors, like the shifting blue and green lights that glimmer through the water (*in the channel strays*).

917.—*of glutinous heat: i. e.*, glutinous when heated.

921.—*Amphitrite:* the wife of Neptune.

923.—In ver. 827, Locrine was stated to be the son of Brutus who was descended from Æneas, the son of Anchises.

934–7.—The confusion of figure here is due to the two conceptions of Sabrina as a maiden and as a river. In the crowned head he is thinking of the former, in the towers and groves, of the latter. *Round* (ver. 935) may be taken as an adverb modifying *crowned*, and *upon* (ver. 936) as a preposition governing *banks*.

945.—*covert:* thicket. Editors have noted that the scene has changed from the palace (*cursed place*, ver. 939), but T. points out that the Spirit may refer by anticipation to the *covert*, everyone knowing that a forest lay round the palace of Comus. This is supported, he notes acutely, by the use of *thence*, not "hence," in the next line.

949.—*gratulate:* welcome, rejoice in

963.—Mercury does not seem to be elsewhere associated with the wood nymphs or Dryads. He may be mentioned here on account of his being the god of inventiveness (cf. *devise*), the discoverer of music, and proverbially light-footed.

972.—*assays:* tests.

976–1011.—When the masque was originally performed, this passage, with slight change, was sung at the opening, and the epilogue began at *But now my task*, ver. 1012.

981, 2.—Cf. ver. 393 and note.

985.—*spruce:* gay, fresh.

991.—*nard and cassia:* aromatic plants.

992.—*Iris:* goddess of the rainbow. Cf. ver. 83, *Iris' woof.*

995.—*purfled:* with embroidered edge (V.).

999.—*Adonis:* the youth beloved of Venus, who died of a wound from a boar's tusk. [The "gardens of Adonis," to which many editors refer in connection with this passage, are not here alluded to.]

1002.—*Assyrian queen:* Ashtaroth, *i. e.*, Venus. She is given her oriental name here in recollection of the eastern origin of the Adonis myth.

1005.—*Psyche:* The soul, beloved of Cupid, according to a late myth. Venus opposed her son's love, and *wandering labors* refers to the tasks set by the goddess for Psyche to perform before she could gain immortality and be united to Cupid.

1011.—This offspring of Cupid and Psyche is Milton's own invention.

1015.—*bowed welkin:* vaulted heaven.

LYCIDAS

Title.—The name is taken from the pastoral poetry of Theocritus and Vergil. Here it stands for Edward King, the subject of the elegy. *Monody:* originally "a solo," then "a lament." This argument was written by Milton for the second edition of the poem.

1–14.—The poem opens with a reference to Milton's resuming the writing of poetry—*Yet once more*—after he had determined to discontinue it for a time.

1, 2.—*laurels . . . myrtles . . . ivy:* evergreens traditionally used for the crowning of poets.

2.—*brown:* dark. Cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 134 and note. *sere:* dry, withered.

3.—*crude:* unripe (with reference to his sense of unreadiness for writing great poetry).

5.—*shatter:* scatter (originally forms of the same word). *before . . . year:* before the autumn ripens the fruit, *i. e.*, before time matures my genius.

6.—*dear.* In Shakspere this word is used, as here, of anything that comes home to one intimately, whether good or bad. *constraint:* compulsion.

7.—*compels:* singular verb, because *constraint* and *occasion* refer to one idea. *due:* proper.

9.—*peer:* equal.

10.—*knew to sing:* a Latin idiom. In modern English we should say, "knew how."

11.—*rhyme:* used here for verse.

13.—*welter:* toss about.

14.—*tear.* This was a conventional figure for elegiac poetry.

15.—*sisters.* The Muses were goddesses of inspiring springs, and so were associated with a number of fountains. V. thinks that *sacred well* here is Aganippe on Mt. Helicon, where there was an altar to Jove; M. and B. think it is Pieria, near Mt. Olympus, on which were the residences of the gods. There is nothing in the passage to give ground for a definite conclusion. Cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 47, 8, and note.

18.—*coy:* bashful, difficult of access, disdainful.

19.—*Muse* here stands for "poet." Note the *he* in ver. 21.

20.—*lucky:* wishing me good luck.

23-36.—In this passage the elegy becomes clearly pastoral. The hill, the shepherds, the rural ditties, etc., signify Cambridge, the student society, college verses, etc. But the allegory is not to be interpreted in every detail, or it becomes ridiculous.

27.—*drove:* supply "our flocks."

28.—"*i. e.*, heard the grey-fly at what time (*i. e.*, when) she winds her sultry horn" (T.). The *grey-fly* is said to be the trumpet-fly, which is heard in the heat of noon, whence *sultry*.

29.—*battening:* feeding. The word is more accurately used in the intransitive sense of "growing fat."

30.—*star:* usually understood as Hesperus, the evening star, and an early draft of the lines shows Milton had this in mind at one time. But critics have pointed out that strictly speaking this star does not rise at sunset, but merely becomes visible then. Moreover, it is already sloping *toward heaven's descent* when it first appears. Perhaps Milton meant to signify the all-night sederunts of fellow-students, in which case the reference would be to any star rising in the evening and setting in the morning.

33.—*tempered to:* harmonized with.

34.—*Satyrs* were the sportive divinities of the fields in Greek mythology, and were later identified with the Fauns of the Romans who also were half men, half goats.

36.—*Damœtas:* a familiar name in the pastorals. Here it may be taken as standing for any of the older men in authority about the University.

40.—*gadding:* straggling.

45.—*canker:* the canker-worm that gnaws the hearts of flowers.

46.—*taint-worm.* The particular worm referred to is not known. *weanling:* lately weaned.

48.—*white-thorn:* the hawthorn, as distinguished from the black-thorn or sloe.

50-63.—This passage addressed to the nymphs has been shown to be imitated from Theocritus (*Idyls* i) and Vergil (*Eclogues* x).

52.—*steep.* Milton doubtless had in mind some mountain on the coast of Wales near the spot where King was drowned.

53.—*bards.* In calling the *Druids* bards, Milton has in mind the fact that they were the minstrels as well as the priests of the Celts.

54.—*Mona:* the Latin name for the island of Angelsey, off the Welsh coast.

55.—*Deva:* the river Dee, which flows along the boundary of Wales into the Irish Sea. *wizard:* with supernatural associations. The origin of these associations is diversely explained. "The river was supposed to be a haunt of magicians, and was so described by Spenser and Drayton" (T.). "It was supposed to foretell, by changing its course, good or ill events for England and Wales, of which it forms the boundary" (V.). There is no reason why Milton should not have had both points in mind.

56.—*fondly:* foolishly. Cf. *Il Pens.*, ver. 6 and note.

58.—*Calliope:* the muse of epic poetry, and mythical mother of Orpheus.

59.—*enchanting:* in the literal sense of using enchantments, *viz.*, his music.

61.—On the loss of Eurydice, Orpheus so disdained all other women that he enraged the Thracian women, who tore him to pieces. His head was thrown into the river Hebrus, and borne to the island of Lesbos, where it was buried. See note on *L'All.*, ver. 145-50. *rout:* an unruly band.

64.—*what boots it:* what good is it?

66.—*shepherd's trade:* as generally in pastoral poetry, this figure stands for the writing of verse. *meditate:* cultivate, practise. Cf. *Comus*, ver. 547 and note. *thankless.* The epithet is probably meant to imply not so much that the Muse is ungrateful as that her service brings no profit from the world.

67.—*use:* are accustomed to do.

67-70.—These lines have usually been interpreted as referring to the amatory poetry of the Cavalier lyrists

such as Herrick. But if the contrast with ver. 66 be held to strictly, does it not rather mean the abandonment of poetry altogether for the life of pleasure—of the Cavalier if you like? *Amaryllis* and *Neœra* are stock names for the heroines of classical love poetry.

70.—*clear.* The word here may be taken as combining the senses of "pure," "unsullied," and of the Lat. *clarus,* illustrious.

71.—The weakness which is the last to be overcome by the noble mind.

73.—*guerdon:* recompense.

75.—*Fury.* Of the three Fates, Clotho spun the thread of life, Lachesis measured the length, and Atropos cut them off. If Atropos is meant here, as seems probable, Milton uses *Fury* for *Fate. Blind Fury* expresses more passionately his feeling of the mad unreason of such a premature cutting off as is the subject of the poem.

76.—*slits:* cuts off. In this sense the same word will serve to govern *praise.*

77.—*Phœbus:* introduced here as the god of poetry. *touched . . . ears.* "The action was a symbolical way of recalling a matter to a person's memory, the ear being regarded as the seat of memory" (Conington, quoted by V.). M. interprets *trembling ears* as an allusion to the popular superstition that a person's ears tingle when people are speaking of him in his absence. Milton thus, he thinks, shows himself conscious of the applicability of the passage on Fame to himself.

79, 80.—The general sense seems to be as follows:—Fame does not consist in the showy achievements (=*glistering foil*) exhibited (=*set off*) to the world, nor in broad rumor. *foil:* gold or silver leaf, such as was placed under transparent gems to increase their brilliance.

82.—*Jove:* God. The word is used here to preserve the consistency of the classical nomenclature.

83.—*lastly:* finally, without appeal.

85.—The lament is resumed here, after the digression on fame. *Arethuse.* Arethusa was a spring in the island of Ortygia in the port of Syracuse in Sicily. It is used here in allusion to the Sicilian school of pastoral poets, Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus.

86.—*Mincius:* the stream by which Vergil was born and which he *honoured* by his poetry. It flows into the Po near Mantua. Here it is used in allusion to Vergil's pastoral poems. *vocal:* because used for shepherds' pipes.

87.—*that strain:* the speech of Phœbus. *mood:* used technically for "kind of music."

88.—*i. e.*, I go on playing on my oaten pipe, or resume my pastoral poem.

89.—*Herald:* Triton, who was Neptune's trumpeter.

90.—*came . . . plea.* This may mean either (1) came to hold a court of inquiry on behalf of Neptune, or (2) came in defence of Neptune (by laying the blame on one of the minor powers).

91.—*felon:* because presumably guilty of the death of King.

96.—*Hippotades.* Æolus, the god of the winds, was the son of Hippotes.

99.—*Panope,* one of the sea-nymphs called nereids, or daughters of Nereus (hence *sisters*).

101.—*eclipse.* Eclipses were regarded as of ill-omen.

103.—*Camus:* the god of the river Cam, here used to represent the University. *footing slow* may refer to the sluggish stream of the Cam, or may be part of the representation of Camus as an old man.

104.—*hairy: i. e.*, with river-weeds. *sedge:* a coarse grass that grows on the banks of rivers.

105.—*figures dim:* faint designs—taken by some to be symbolical of the old traditions of Cambridge.

106.—*sanguine:* bloody (the literal meaning). The flower is the hyacinth, named after the mythical Spartan youth Hyacinthus. He was killed by a quoit thrown by Apollo, but blown aside by Zephyrus, who was jealous of the youth's love for Apollo. From his blood sprang the flower, and on its petals the words, *Ai, Ai* (alas, alas!) were supposed to be traceable.

107.—*reft:* snatched away. *pledge:* child (a translation of the Lat. *pignus,* which is used in both senses).

111.—*pilot:* St. Peter. He is introduced as the founder of the Church, in which King had intended to take orders. The belief that Peter is the keeper of the keys of heaven is derived from *Matthew,* XVI, 19, and the tradition of the number has grown up in the Church. The difference in metal and function is due to Milton. *amain:* with force.

112.—*mitred:* wearing a mitre, as a dignitary of the Church. *bespake:* used simply in the sense of "spoke." The modern use is restricted.

114.—*enow:* poetical form of "enough."

115.—"First, those who *creep* into the fold: who do not care for office or name, but for secret influence. . . . . Then those who *intrude* (thrust, that is) themselves into the fold, who, by natural insolence of heart, and stout eloquence of tongue, and fearlessly perseverant self-assertion, obtain hearing and authority with the common crowd. Lastly, those who *climb,* who by labour and learning, both stout and sound, but selfishly exerted in the cause of their own ambition, gain high dignities and authorities, and become 'lords over the heritage,' though not 'ensamples to the flock.' "

—Ruskin: *Sesame and Lilies,* § 21.

117.—*shearers' feast: i. e.,* the endowments meant for the working clergy.

118.—*worthy bidden guest:* cf. *Matthew,* XXII, 1-9.

119.—*blind mouths:* "A 'Bishop' means 'a person who sees.' A 'Pastor' means 'a person who feeds.' The most unbishoply character a man can have is therefore to be Blind. The most unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed,—to be a Mouth."

—*Sesame and Lilies*, § 22.

120, 1.—The pastoral imagery familiar in connection with the Church is here united with that of the conventional literary type which the poem follows in general.

122.—*What recks . . . sped:* What does it matter to them? What more do they want? They have succeeded in getting what they were after, the material rewards of the priesthood.

123.—*list:* please. The implication is that they preached only when they felt inclined. *lean:* containing no spiritual nourishment. *flashy*: watery, insipid, trashy.

124.—*scrannel:* said to be a Lancashire dialect word meaning "thin," "meagre." The sound of the word and the context go far to give us Milton's idea. Cf. Scottish, *scran*, to scrape together.

126.—*rank:* poisonous. The suggestion is that the careless shepherds let the sheep wander into pestilential marshes. Symbolically, it refers to the risk of heresy. *draw:* inhale.

128.—*grim wolf:* the church of Rome. *privy:* referring to the secret proselytizing then going on.

130.—*two-handed engine. engine*=instrument. The reference here is obscure. A favorite explanation is that it is to "the axe laid unto the root of the tree" (*Matthew* III, 10); M. sees a reference to the two Houses of Parliament V. to the sword of Justice. Perhaps Milton meant nothing more than that an effective remedy was *at the door i. e.*, close at hand.

132.—*Alpheus.* Just as after the digression on Fame h resumed by calling on Arethusa as a symbol of pastora

poetry, so after this digression on the state of the Church he calls on Alpheus, the lover of Arethusa. The *dread voice* is, of course, St. Peter's, and the shrinking of the streams represents the checking of the flow of pastoral verse.

133.—*Sicilian muse.* Cf. note on ver. 85.

136.—*use:* dwell, have their haunts.

138.—*swart star: i. e.*, the star that makes things swart or dark with scorching, the Dog-star, Sirius. *sparely:* but little, seldom.

139.—*quaint enamelled eyes:* curiously colored flowers.

141.—*purple:* imperative of the verb. *Purple* is used in a general sense, "to make richly colored."

142.—*rathe:* early. Used now only in the comparative. *forsaken.* This is usually interpreted as "unwedded," partly because Milton first wrote "unwedded" in obvious reminiscence of Shakspere's

> Pale primroses
> That die unmarried, ere they can behold
> Bright Phœbus in his strength.

But perhaps he was thinking of the loneliness of the primrose, blooming in retired places, and so early that few other flowers are out.

149.—*amaranthus.* The name is Greek, meaning "never-fading."

151.—*laureate hearse. hearse* has had a great variety of meanings, but here it is understood to signify the wooden frame on which the coffin rested. Memorial stanzas were often fastened to this, hence *laureate* refers to *Lycidas* and the other verses written in honor of King.

153, 4.—Milton recalls the fact that he has been playing with the idea that they really had the body of King for burial, when in fact it was lost in the sea. *surmise:* fancy.

154.—The series of clauses beginning at *whilst* are all subordinate to the clause in ver. 153.

156.—*Hebrides:* islands off the west coast of Scotland.

158.—*monstrous:* inhabited by monsters.

159.—*moist vows:* tearful vows.

160.—*fable of Bellerus: i. e.*, Land's End, in the extreme southwest of England. The Latin name for this cape was *Bellerium*, and this word Milton derives from an imaginary *Bellerus.*

161.—*guarded mount:* St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall, on which was a craggy seat where the Archangel was fabled to appear at times: hence *great vision.* There are ruins of a fortress on the hill, but the epithet *guarded* is more likely to refer to the protection of the angel.

162.—*Namancos and Bayona* are both on the coast of Spain near Cape Finisterre, the direction in which the vision of the Archangel was fabled to have looked over the sea.

163.—*ruth:* pity. Professor Corson ingeniously suggests that in this line we have a further reference to the ecclesiastical situation. In making the Archangel Michael, the guardian of the Church, look towards Spain, the stronghold of Catholicism, Milton, he thinks, meant to symbolize the Archangel's watchfulness against foreign danger. But now that the Church is exposed to danger from within, he calls on him to *Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth.*

164.—*dolphins:* in allusion to the story of Arion, a Greek poet and musician. Once, when he was at sea, the crew determined to kill him for his wealth, but he obtained permission to sing to his lyre for the last time, and then jump into the sea. His music brought a number of dolphins round the ship, and when he jumped overboard they bore him safe to land, where he had the sailors punished.

168.—*day-star:* the sun.

170.—*tricks:* dresses. *ore:* here used for "sparkling metal." Milton probably thought of gold. "No doubt, this was due to a mistaken belief that *ore=aurum*" (V.).

175.—*nectar:* used to keep up the imagery of pagan mythology, though in a description of the Christian heaven. *oozy:* moist, referring to the manner of his death.

176.—*unexpressive:* inexpressible. *nuptial song.* Cf. *Revelation,* XIX, 9, "Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

186–193.—The last eight lines form a stanza (in *ottava rima,* as has been pointed out) apart, in which the poet no longer sings as a shepherd, but in a detached way describes the speaker of the foregoing.

186.—*uncouth:* literally, "unknown," here "rough," "rustic."

188.—*stops:* the holes in a wind instrument. *quills.* Skeat says that this sense of "reed" is probably older than that of "feather."

189.—*Doric.* The Sicilian pastoral poets wrote in the Doric dialect.

190.—Had lengthened out the shadows of the hills.

192.—*twitched:* gathered round him.

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